WOMEN AND THE CODIFICATION OF THE AMAZIGH LANGUAGE

FATIMA SADIQI

Women and the Codification of the Amazigh Language

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In loving memory of my mother, Fadma Hmad N'Ayt Bourhim.

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A Note on Terminology

Various terms have been used to refer to the Amazigh people and their language. This variety reflects the waves of civilizations that settled in North Africa throughout the centuries. To avoid confusion, I will briefly define the terms as I use them in this book: *Amazigh*, *Tamazight*, and *Berber*.

In naming the Amazigh people, the term *Barbaroi* was used by the Greeks and the term *Barbarus* by the Romans. With the coming of Arabs, the Arabic term بربر (*barbar*) started to be used, especially by Ibn Khadun. The Romans also used the term *Mazices*, which phonologically echoes "Amazigh" and its cognates, as a tribal name to refer to the indigenous African, including the Amazigh people (Brett and Fentress 1996: 5). As for the French colonizers, their used term became *berbère*, and the Spanish colonizers used *bereber*. The English equivalent is *Berber*.

On the other hand, the term *Bavares* was used by Camp-fabrer (1955) under the rubric "Semitic names," with the explanation that this term gave us *Berber*, just as the term *Mauri* gave us the term *Moor*.

In the middle of the twentieth century, the term *Berber* started to be replaced by the term *Tamazight* to refer to the language and *Imazighen* to refer to the people who use this language. The former term originated in the Moroccan dialect of the Middle Atlas and spread to the other countries of the Maghreb. More specifically, the terms *Amazigh* and *Tamazight* have been used by the Amazigh people to refer to "an Amazigh man" and "an Amazigh woman" respectively. The word *Tamazight* has also been used by lay people and academics to refer to the language, and sometimes to the specific variety used in the Middle Atlas, as opposed to *Tarifit* (used in the Rif region, in the northeast) and *Tasousit* (used in the Souss region, in the south).

In the sixteenth century, Leo Africanus (1981) advanced that the terms *Amazigh* and *Imazighen* are related to "free," which leads to the idea that

Imazighen meant "free men." Chaker (1987) contests the idea that the root {m z g} is related to the meaning of "free" in the Amazigh language. It is also important to note that the Amazigh term *amajegh* is used by the Tuareg populations to express "nobility" (Brett and Fentress 1996: 6). They add:

> The binomial noble/free gives us a self-image that is perhaps the closest we can come to a universal Berber trait. It is not random or tied to a specific historical moment.

As for the word *Amazigh* (*Amazighe* in French), it is increasingly used by academics, mainly linguists, since the outset of the twentieth century to refer to all the dialects and varieties of the language. This term was institutionalized in 2001 by the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture (Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe). In French, *Amazigh* is masculine, and *Amazighe* is feminine.

I experienced these shifts in terminology firsthand in my research, and I think they are normal when languages experience shifts in their official or perceived status, as is the case in the current situation of the Amazigh language. I will use the term *Berber* when referring to ancient literature that uses the term or in quotations.

On the other hand, while there is a clear shift from the use of *Berber* to the use of *Amazigh* in French and other European languages, it is less so in English, generally perceived as a non-colonial language, as will be further explained in chapter 1.

In this book, I use the term *Amazigh* as a generic term to refer to the language and culture, as well as to people. I use *Amazigh* because it is the term the populations under study have called themselves. The use of the name *Berber* is somewhat arbitrary: it is of external origin, and certainly not a Berber word. Using the term *Amazigh* is also in congruence with the principle of economy that characterizes language use in general. Finally, using the term *Amazigh* as a generic term is in the interest of linguistic generalization that will serve the standardization of the language in its transition from oral to written status.

Introduction

WEAVING WOMEN'S ART IN AMAZIGH STUDIES

This book links Amazigh women's rug designs and the Amazigh alphabet Tifinagh and argues that the designs inspired the alphabet. The linkage and the argument are built on layers of complexity highlighting and gap-readings, the understanding of which took years of reflection and research. The aim of this book is to show that the reading of complexities and gaps are part and parcel of Amazigh Studies. More broadly, this book is inspired by a growing interest in the topic of women and language and a growing awareness that recovering women's role in the history of linguistics involves the mapping of hitherto-unexplored territories. Such an investigation would require, as has indeed been the case in the writing of this book, extensive and painstaking research into a range of primary sources, manuscripts, archeological findings, and archives. In many instances, work in this field has to start from something close to *tabula rasa*.

The history and status of Amazigh women's ancestral art of weaving is intriguing and poorly understood. Often associated with the "rural," the "exotic," or the "folkloric," this art has not hitherto been seriously interrogated as a genuine academic topic in Amazigh Studies. Yet Amazigh women's weaving presents layers of complexity where history, gender, and community survival intersect and interlock with the coding of the language. While various readings of these intersections have been documented in one way or another and for various colonial, religious, or political purposes, the intersection of weaving and the Amazigh language has not, to my knowledge, been tackled from an academic insider perspective.

The history of Amazigh weaving is also the history of the Amazigh language. In this book, this history is not seen from mainstream studies in

other languages, but through "glimpses" of the legacies of Amazigh non-literate women. It is a window on Northern Africa's historical and cultural complexities that dispel the myth of its homogeneity or "appendix" status to other regions. Exploring Amazigh women's art of weaving is considering the agency of non-literate people with no written documentation to use. In sum, in authoring this book, I take a long durée perspective, not to bring about solutions, but to open venues of research on Amazigh women's remarkable contributions to Amazigh studies.

SCOPE OF THE BOOK

The geographical scope of this book mirrors its historical scope. In other words, as this historical scope goes back to pre-history and extends to the present times, it necessarily covers what is today referred to as "North Africa" in its relation to the Great African Desert/Sahara.[1] The prehistoric age covers the millions of years that took place before human beings began to create written records of their lives and of the worlds in which they lived. Archeology and similar fields of study allow us to fill in some gaps and piece together an image of what life was like for our ancestors, including what kinds of flora and fauna they might have encountered.

Pre-history is also referred to as "antiquity," a term that is defined in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* as follows:

> Classical Antiquity is a historical period spanning from the output and ancient Greek author Homer in the 8th century BCE to the decline of the Roman Empire in the 5th century CE. (Encyclopedia Britannica)[2]

METHODOLOGY AND BACKGROUND RESEARCH

This book is not a history of "exceptional" women, often associated with elite circles, or even women who contributed to the mainstream "male" canon, but who had to fit in a specific male-dominated methodology and value system. It is a history of anonymous women, more associated with poor and marginalized categories even in contemporary disciplines and women's studies. These women's ongoing functioning in male-dominated and hierarchical structures is remarkable. In other words, this book presents a story told from the margins of the marginalized. As such, it is a deliberate departure from the traditional male-dominated methodologies and canon (Lerner 1976), and it is meant to open new spaces, new categories, new criteria, and new methodologies when addressing North African women's historical experiences.

To address these experiences, or what we think of these experiences, we need to delimit the disciplines and ways in which some interactions between them allow coherence in conceptualization and methodology. The first disciplines that come to mind are history, archeology, anthropology, and linguistics. A combination of these disciplines allows us to draw threads together and search for continuities, discontinuities, and intersections. Thus, while history and archeology help us situate and connect periods in time, anthropology and linguistics help us understand the gaps and link the past to the present. In this book, I will navigate between these four disciplines because Amazigh women's art is both ancient and present and, more significantly, because this art has always been excluded from the academic canon and, ironically, has kept some of its semantic characteristics intact. For example, while rock inscriptions have attracted archeologists and historians, as well as anthropologists and linguists, and have resulted in important findings that indicate continuities and discontinuities in the long history of the Amazigh people, they have hardly touched upon the role of women in inspiring these designs and through them encoding the Amazigh language. In addressing this topic, I aim to fill a gap in the Amazigh linguistics/studies, and in centering art in this endeavor, I aim at "defolklorizing" Amazigh women's artistic legacies and presenting them as genuine agency.

As such, this book is a contribution to a feminist reading of the history of Amazigh linguistics. This is a promising field of enquiry that presents challenges and opportunities and has the potential of moving forward our knowledge of the historical construction of the Maghreb and North Africa. Indeed, there is extraordinarily little knowledge on Amazigh linguistic historiography and even less on the contributions of women to the history of the Amazigh populations. From a broader perspective, this book is also part of the current interest in the role of historical and archeological knowledge in highlighting women's roles in the construction of knowledge.

The dearth of research on women's contributions to the codification of the Amazigh language may be due to two factors: On the one hand, while the focus in Amazigh studies is more on the institutional (public) aspect of the history of the Amazigh language, women's contributions to this history are more often found in private, especially domestic, realms. On the other hand, it is commonly (and mistakenly) believed that there is nothing or truly little to be found on the topic at hand.

Much of the background research for this book is based on firsthand ethnographic research, observation, and personal experience. My status as a linguist whose native language is Amazigh has helped me prepare this background research. I wrote both my M.A. and Ph.D. theses on the language, in addition to several subsequent publications, including the first grammar of the language by a native speaker.

Often using the ethnic and/or ideological lens, traditional historians of North Africa have positioned the Amazigh populations in a "secondary" position vis-à-vis the invading populations (Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs). This has been at the root of negative representations that have throughout the centuries been associated with the Amazigh populations. One of these stereotypes is that the Amazigh people did not produce a "civilization" that is specific to them, and that the Amazigh remained on the margins of the cultures and civilizations of the peoples with whom they interacted or who "conquered" them. However, such views are now obsolete in the presence of recent historical studies and archeological searches that focus on the Amazigh people and their legacies, which prove beyond doubt that the Amazigh have always had a civilization, a history, and a language that distinguish them from the populations they interacted with throughout millennia, and that they have marked their times as pioneers in numerous civilizational areas such as agricultural knowledge, the domestication of animals, the discovery of minerals, writing, religious thought, and a unique monarchical political system.

Accessing the "archives" of Amazigh women's designs was easy for me. I come from an Amazigh family of weavers and have therefore used my lifetime of experience, as well as the memorized and gathered information on the value of rugs in my community, the special position of the weavers, and the sacred nature of their performance in the writing of this book. I still remember how I watched my paternal aunts weave and learned early in my life to keep silent or leave the room during the weaving sessions. I enjoyed the chanting and solemn gestures, the gazes and body postures when they would collectively lift the finished rug to the sky in the patio of the house (the open space in the middle of the house that opens to the sky). I also learned then that the weavers did not allow men and boys to be present during the weaving process, and I remember my brother's frustration every time he was denied access to the weaving sessions. Besides causing me to feel privileged, the whole experience evoked in me a mixture of enchantment and constant curiosity. In my girl's imagination, rugs were not just any type of furniture; they were animated objects that "had a life" during the weaving period and that "died" when finished and lifted to the sky amidst chanting. My aunts' upright body postures, upward stretched hands, and faces turned upward filled my childhood imagination with excitement and joy. In my child's eyes, these rituals were uplifting and enchanting performances that imposed silence on us, the audience. After each "death" of a rug, I was looking for the "birth" of the next one. When I later became a linguist, I realized how I had always associated the Amazigh language with women and with home, as opposed to Arabic, which I learned at school and which I associated with men and the outside world.

This background allowed me to use my insider status to make sense of the rugs through an intuitive and textual reading of the rugs and associate it with the designs in body adornment the women of my village display on their chins, arms, and chests and of which they are so proud. When in 2004 I began working with five other linguists on the first-ever textbooks of the Amazigh language for young children, the alphabet of this language, Tifinagh, immediately struck me as close in design to the motifs I watched my aunts draw on the rugs. I also extended this association to body adornment. These associations started to make sense: they bring together weaving, body adornment, and writing in symbolic symbiosis!

Indeed, part of the methodology I used for authoring this book was to explore and analyze how the rug designs became tattooed and hennaed, and how they related to the codification of the Amazigh language, the thread between all these being the overall physical similarity of the recurrent shapes and forms. Surely, this similarity is not random. Indeed, this book shows how the forms provide important explicative information. For example, they give us insights into the nomadic rural environment in which Amazigh communities lived, the importance of sheep as a source of wool provision, and more importantly, the conception of wool as a source of art. They tell us about women's cosmology and beliefs and their role in preserving their language. I also used a textual analysis to read the combination of two or three designs as a reflection of the goddess Tanit in women's cosmology. While more research is needed to explore the rug as text and investigate the presence of other goddesses, Tanit looms large in Amazigh women's art, and in the absence of documentation on ancient Amazigh beliefs, her presence provides glimpses of information on the fact that ancient Amazigh people developed their beliefs locally and that women were central in the creation, development, and preservation of these beliefs.

In sum, this book assumes a *longue durée* perspective to revisit weaving as a multifaceted, indigenous practice and highlight the legacy of the Amazigh people, as it relates to the individual and collective identities, a specific territory, and especially the revival of Amazigh women's contribution to knowledge and the making of North Africa and Africa tout court.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions on which this book is based are: (i) Why is there an ignorance about the Amazighs', especially women's, roles in modern historiography? (ii) Is this ignorance related to the fact that Amazigh women's history is oral? (iii) Why are Amazigh women associated with the production of culture and not with the production of knowledge? (iv) Why has Tifinagh, the

Amazigh alphabet, survived although it has been used only for short texts? (v) Could Amazigh women's art be behind the codification of the Amazigh language?

These research questions motivated the choice of the topics of this book. With respect to the first question, Brett and Fentress (1996) give the following reasons for the quasi-absence of Amazigh in the modern historiography of the Maghreb:

> Writing about the Berbers [Amazigh] after the Arab conquest is still today not politically correct in the Maghreb: desire for the unity of Islam through its sacred language, Arabic, the attempt of the French to create a Berber 'fifth column' in the Maghreb to support their colonial project and a substantial current of the left has always tried to suppress ethnic differences. (Brett and Fentress 1996: 7)

The second research question highlights the role of women in this historiography and the oral aspect of this role. The third research question aims to highlight the two components of Amazigh identity that are increasingly gaining center stage in current political and intellectual debates: "language" and "culture," with the proviso that while women are highlighted as preservers of the Amazigh culture, mainly through a recognition of their ancestral art of weaving, they are seldom, if at all, presented as agents in the construction of its language. More importantly, while there is a consensus on the significant role of the Amazigh language in the construction of Amazigh culture, there is almost no hint at the role of women in the construction, that is, the codification, of the Amazigh language. The fourth research question brings about the fact that women are not only agents in the making of both the Amazigh culture and the Amazigh language, but they are also agents in anchoring the latter in the former through the creation of rug designs that inspired the Amazigh alphabet Tifinagh. As for the fifth research question, it underlines the role of women's rug designs in the codification and stabilization of the Amazigh language.

CENTRAL THESIS

The research questions outlined in the preceding section led to the central thesis of this book: Amazigh women's art served to codify the Amazigh language through an artistic alphabet that has survived for centuries although it was not used to record long texts. Supporting this central thesis was not an easy task in the absence of continuity in the historical documentation in the Amazigh language. However, historical, and archeological interest in the Amazigh language and culture have proved to be revealing avenues of research on this topic.

To address the central thesis, I use five ideas that branch out from the thesis. I start by presenting the Amazigh people and their language within an overarching historical context, then I position Amazigh women between the production of culture and the production of knowledge. Central to women's production of knowledge is Tifinagh, the Amazigh alphabet, which I present and contextualize historically. I then turn to women's rug designs with a focus on their main physical and symbolic characteristics. Finally, I use the preceding four ideas to argue that the rug designs strikingly resemble the Tifinagh letters and are thus at the root of the codification of the Amazigh language. This is a unique phenomenon in the history of Amazigh linguistics. I will discuss each one of these ideas in a specific chapter. This book contains five main chapters and a sixth concluding chapter.

CHAPTER DETAILS

Chapter One: The Amazigh People and Their Language: A Historical Context

To understand the historical depth of Amazigh women's role in the codification of the Amazigh language, we need to understand who the Amazigh people are—namely, their origin, as well as the historical, social, and cultural aspects of the Amazigh communities and the ways in which women evolved in these communities. In this chapter, I will address the overall status of women throughout the long history of the Amazigh people, their culture, and their language. This overall historical framing also helps us understand the relative invisibility of women in the linguistic canon.

This historical contextualization shows the close relationship between the Amazigh people and their language. Indeed, it is this close relationship that best explains the extraordinary longevity of the language. At the heart of this relationship resides the poorly known role of women. This role has been recognized at the historical level, but not at the linguistic level, a gap this book attempts to fill.

Chapter Two: Amazigh Women Between the Production of Culture and the Production of Knowledge

The historical dimension of the Amazigh people and their language (chapter 1) includes several pointers to the significant roles that women played in the construction and preservation of this historical dimension. Indeed, women have never ceased to function as the backbone of the Amazigh communities and the carriers of Amazigh cultural and linguistic identities. However,

despite this widely recognized fact, women have hitherto received a disproportionately small share of space in Amazigh studies, especially those that focus on the core or formal aspects of the language. In other words, while some anthropological studies have positioned women at the heart of Amazigh communities, not only as homemakers, but also as saints, military leaders, and artists, very little attention has hitherto been given to their role in the formal construction of the Amazigh language itself. It is high time this gap was addressed. The time is ripe now that the field of linguistics has started to pay attention to women's roles in the stabilization of human languages across the world. An example of this new trend is the long-awaited pioneer anthology by feminist linguists from around the world, *Women in the History of Linguistics*.[3] It is along this new trend in linguistics studies that the idea of this book took shape. Exploring the role of women in the codification and stabilization of the Amazigh language is reclaiming women's linguistic agency in the history of the Amazigh language and culture, given the close relationship between the two. I argue here that Amazigh women could well have created or participated in the creation of the Amazigh alphabet, Tifinagh, through an unconventional medium in linguistics: art. Admittedly, this is not an easy task given the physical nature of the Amazigh alphabet and the lack of documents written with this alphabet. I address the Tifinagh alphabet and its roots in chapters 3 and 4 and women's role in the construction of this alphabet in chapter 5. To prepare the ground for the discussions in these central chapters, and given the fact that Amazigh studies are first and foremost knowledge-based, this second chapter focuses on Amazigh women, not only as producers of culture but also as producers of knowledge.

The chapter starts with a section on the difference between the production of culture and the production of knowledge. The second section addresses the role of women in the production of culture; the third section deals with the topic of Amazigh women and religion; the fourth section with women and economic management; and the last section deals with women as artists in the history of the Amazigh people and their culture.

Chapter Three: The Amazigh Alphabet, Tifinagh

The Amazigh alphabet, Tifinagh, is one of the most ancient alphabets that humans created. It has artistic and linguistic roots that go back to pre-history. In chapter 4, I link these two characteristics of Tifinagh to a similarly ancient female art and means of expression: weaving. The artistic and linguistic combination that defines the Amazigh alphabet is unique, albeit poorly known. Indeed, Tifinagh has received very little institutional attention mainly due to the systematic marginalization of the Amazigh language and populations throughout history. Available information allows us to speculate that

Amazigh art is as ancient as Amazigh populations and that it was initiated in North Africa and the Great Sahara. This information also tells us that women participated in the creation of this art through, among other things, weaving. While chapters 4 and 5 bring us closer to this weaving, as well as its designs, meanings, and role in the codification of the Amazigh language, this chapter brings us closer to what could be material manifestations of weaving: rock inscriptions and the Amazigh alphabet, Tifinagh.

Chapter Four: Amazigh Women's Rug Designs and Their Meanings

This chapter focuses on the Amazigh women's art of weaving, more precisely the designs women have been creating on the rugs since time immemorial. This creativity has been carried out from generation to generation within a double process that may be termed *skill transfer* and *knowledge transfer*. Involving both skill and knowledge, Amazigh women's art pleases our senses, but also intrigues our minds. Although their shapes have evolved throughout the centuries, the designs have retained some core graphic patterns that characterize the Tifinagh alphabet.

The best entry to a debunking of these two entangled aspects of women's weaving is a close consideration of the designs. This is what this fourth chapter sets out to address. The first part of the chapter highlights the designs as ancestral art and relates it to the beginnings of agriculture in the regions that were inhabited by the Amazigh people. The advent of agriculture has historically been associated with the social organization of Amazigh communities, as well as the importance of rain and its relation to fertility, divinity, and religion. The second part uses a specific methodology to focus on the various semantic functions of the rug designs, namely as cultural markers, identity markers, and a historical archive, and underlines some related practices that have adopted the core patterns of the Amazigh women's art of weaving, namely body tattooing, henna decoration, and cloth-making.

Chapter Five: Women and the Codification of the Amazigh Language

The codification of a language is a way of stabilizing it through, for example, writing. Highlighting women's role in the codification of the Amazigh language is not an easy task for several reasons, the most salient of which being the nature of the Amazigh alphabet, the lack of documents written with this alphabet, and the systematic marginalization of women in the linguistic canon. However, an interdisciplinary approach reveals genuine indicators of

women's central role in the codification of the Amazigh language. Admittedly, further research in this field is needed.

While chapters 1 and 2 situate the story of the Amazigh populations and their language in a broad historical framework, and position women in this framework as both producers of culture and producers of knowledge, chapter 3 presents the Amazigh writing system (Tifinagh) as the central element that has kept the Amazigh history and culture together from antiquity to the present time, and chapter 4 links this alphabet to women's rug designs. Throughout the four chapters, glimpses of women through the filmy veil of female divinity, rug symbolic icons, or the process of community-building have been highlighted. This highlighting is synthesized through women's rug designs, their meaning, their powerful symbolism, and their importance in understanding the Amazigh language and culture. This fifth chapter builds on the four preceding chapters to underscore the linguistic aspect of the rug designs, a hitherto-neglected theme in Amazigh studies, and to argue that women's rug designs may well be at the root of the Amazigh alphabet, Tifinagh, hence at the root of the codification of the Amazigh language.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

This concluding chapter wraps up the main ideas of the five chapters and opens them to further research.

NOTES

1. I use the terms *Sahara* and *desert* interchangeably in this book.
2. I use *pre-history* and *antiquity* interchangeably in this book.
3. This anthology is edited by Wendy Bennet-Ayres and Helena Sanson, and was published by Oxford University Press in 2020.

Chapter 1

The Amazigh People and Their Language

A Historical Context

To understand the historical depth of Amazigh women's role in the codification of the Amazigh language, we need to understand who the Amazigh people are—namely, their origin, as well as the historical, social, and cultural aspects of the Amazigh communities and ways in which women evolved in these communities. The overall status of women throughout the long history of the Amazigh people, their culture, and their language are addressed in this chapter. This overall historical framing also helps us understand the relative invisibility of women in the more recent linguistic canon.

This historical contextualization shows the close relationship between the Amazigh people and their language. Indeed, it is this close relationship that best explains the extraordinary longevity of the language. At the heart of this relationship resides the poorly known role of women. This role has been recognized at the historical level, but not at the linguistic level, a gap this book attempts to fill.

THE AMAZIGH POPULATIONS

Today Amazigh populations live in a vast discontinuous geographical area. They are diverse and sometimes multilingual, but first, what is the origin of these populations?

Origin

The historical and geographical origins of the Amazigh populations are intertwined and interdependent. Invoking the history of the Amazigh people is also almost automatically invoking the geographical aspect of this history.

Historically, there is a consensus among scholars that the Amazigh people are the first inhabitants of what we refer to today as "North Africa," a region that extends from what is now Morocco to the Siwa region in Egypt and from the south of Morocco into the Sahara-Sahel. The Canary Islands, as well as parts of Sicily in Italy and beyond, also claim an Amazigh origin.

Whether historical or geographical, the origin of the Amazigh people attracted the attention of Greek and Roman, then Arab historians. In modern times, most of this literature has been written in Arabic and French. Regardless of the period, this literature seems to be often controversial and highly politicized, especially in modern times. Three scenarios may be singled out: the Arabic scenario, the European scenario, and the native scenario.

The Arabic scenario situates the Amazigh's geographical origin in the Canaan Middle Eastern region (Ibn Khaldun). According to this version, the Amazigh people historically descended from "Mazigh" Ibn Canaan Ibn Ham Ibn Nuh. Their affiliation with Ham makes them Hamites. This hypothesis presupposes that the Amazigh migrated from the Middle East to North Africa.

The second scenario, the European one, locates this origin in the Mediterranean region (Sforza, Menozzi and Piazza 1994; Brett and Fentress 1996). The term *Mediterranean* for Brett and Fentress is not equivalent to *European*, as it refers to both the northern and southern shores of the sea; hence, I would call it the "Mediterranean," as opposed to the European scenario. French historian Dobra indicates that the Amazigh is a race of Aryans, not Semites, who migrated from the areas of the king in India, long ago. Italian anthropologists also claim that the Amazigh, especially the Tuareg (still living in southern Algeria) were originally from southern Italy and had migrated to this region across the Mediterranean in ancient times.

The third scenario, the native one, roots the geographical origin of the Amazigh in the Saharan region of Africa referred to as the "Great Desert" (Ouachi 2003; Chafik 2005). While the Western view goes back at least to the Roman period and the Arabic view to the fourteenth century or earlier (see Shatzmiller [1995] on the debates in Andalusia), the native view is more recent and has been gathering considerable momentum in the postcolonial era with the advent of postcolonial archeology since the late decades of the twentieth century. An increasing number of archeologists from the Maghreb and the larger North Africa are consolidating the native scenario and, thus, informing a parallel increase in the number of native historians, anthropologists, and linguists, sometimes working within disciplinary teams, and sometimes crossing the disciplinary lines.

Despite the different overall intellectual contexts in which these scenarios were proposed and argued for, the three views agree that the Amazigh have a long history, going back at least to antiquity, and as such, they have initiated

what is often regarded as "Amazigh (Berber) Studies." These studies increasingly gained in status and credibility with the advent of modern historical archeology.[1] An important current that now runs through most of these studies is the millennial history of the Amazigh populations and the impossibility of understanding today's societies of North Africa without a heuristic understanding of the historical impact of the Amazigh people and their language on the region. The third scenario will be focused on in the section below as it relates more directly to the main theme of this book.

THE NATIVE SCENARIO

While an increasing number of anthropologists, historians, linguists, and archeologists from North Africa acknowledge population movements and mixing, thanks to several factors that will be detailed later in this chapter, they focus more on migration/movement within the African continent. As such, they argue for a native (African) scenario instead of an Arab or European one (Hachid 2001; Ouachi 2003; Chafik 2005; Skounti et al. 2003).

According to the native scenario, the indigenous (North) African origin of the Amazigh populations is established based on available historical sources such as pharaonic chronicles, Greek and Roman texts, as well as archeological findings and the accompanying documentation such as rock inscriptions, funeral furniture, monuments, and their respective descriptions. Of all these sources, archeological findings are widely acknowledged among the scholars to have greatly improved our knowledge of the origin of the Amazigh populations. These findings are not necessarily corroborated by anthropological findings, but they nonetheless illuminate the main venues of research on the origin of the Amazigh populations.

Thus, Moroccan archeologist Ouachi (2003) considers the al-Sahra' al-kubra (the Great Sahara), also referred to as the "Sahara Desert," an extension of North Africa. For him, the droughts in this region changed its climate from rainy, to dry, back to rainy only ten thousand years ago. This means that in the rainy period, the Great Sahara abounded with animal, plant, and human life. Ouachi then argues that this monumental climatic change played a major role in the existence and evolution of the Amazigh populations in North Africa.[2] For Ouachi, archeological searches have proved beyond doubt that the Great Sahara was a pioneer region in various civilizational areas. In highlighting the African roots of the Amazigh populations and civilizations, Ouachi locates these roots in antiquity without postulating a specific Amazigh race or Amazigh ethnicity line in ancient North Africa. This fact, according to him, is congruent with modern scientific theories that refute the idea of a "pure" race anywhere in the world.

While the Amazigh people do not constitute a race in the scientific sense of the term, they have, throughout history, constituted a distinct people. The distinctive nature of the Amazigh people is mainly due to a rough homogeneity at the level of culture and language. This is in line with Ouachi's definition of a population as a combination of several human communities whose specificities interacted and intermingled along centuries and millennia. People who share a given language and/or culture do not necessarily come from the same or contingent root because, as Ouachi (ibid.) states, language travels from one population to another through various means such as trade, intermarriage, conquest, invasions, and so on. In the case of the Amazigh populations, what led to the formation of their communities and societies was not founded on biological facts, but on the culture and language mix that has, to the day, resulted in Amazigh agglomerations. To clarify this and understand the centrality of the culture-language mix in the formation of Amazigh communities, Ouachi pinpoints the challenges of discussing the Amazigh populations outside a common "material culture" and language.

From the perspective of this book, Ouachi's argument, that the Great Sahara is a natural extension of North Africa, is crucial in associating the roots of the Amazigh populations and the subsequent human movements and civilizational changes, including the sociocultural ones, to those of the Great Sahara. The linkages are consolidated by the Amazigh people's religious beliefs. This is the topic of the following section.

Evolution

Just as archeology improved our knowledge of the origin of Amazigh populations, it also improved our knowledge of the evolution of these populations. Here, as well, one of the most comprehensive accounts of this evolution is provided by Ouachi (2003). This author singles out four main phases in the evolution of Amazigh populations and gives them names according to the types of populations that existed in each phase: the Australopithecus, the Homo Erectus, the Neanderthals, and the Ighoud.

The Australopithecus, southern chimpanzees, lived in east and south Africa at the end of the third geological phase. The existence of this phase is supported by the discovery in 1972 of the remnants of a woman named by the archeologists who discovered her as "Lucy." The remnants in question go back to some 3.5 million years.[3]

Most of the texts on North Africa by native scholars that I have consulted, as well as the works that some of them cite (Almagro Basch 1946; Camps 1960; Hachid 2001; Skounti et al. 2006), refer to materials that go back to the Stone Age found in Morocco (north, south, center, and the Great Sahara). More recently, the French journalist Hervé Morin states:

> Des restes, trouvés au Maroc, de cinq individus datant d'environ 315,000 ans pourraient repousser de 100,000 ans l'âge de notre espèce, et plaideraient pour son origine "panafricaine." (*Le Monde*, 7 June 2017)

> Remnants, found in Morocco, of five individuals dating back around 315,000 years, could push back the age of our species by 100,000 years, and would argue for its "Pan-African" origin. (translation provided by the author)

Other such discoveries followed suit in Morocco as excavations continued. In the meanwhile, the archeological findings suggest, as some of the above-mentioned scholars assert, that humans are no longer thought to have evolved from the African east some two hundred thousand years ago, as was assumed until very recently.

As for the second phase in the evolution of the Amazigh populations, the Homo Erectus phase goes back one million and four hundred thousand years. According to Ouachi (2003) and Skounti et al. (2003), the relevant excavations attest that people belonging to this phase lived in Morocco and that nothing similar was found in the Arab Peninsula; the oldest such remnants being found in Yemen go back only twenty-four thousand years.

In the third phase, the Neanderthals (a human species that lived between 200,000 and 35,000 years BC) are attested to have lived in Morocco since the discovery in the archeological site of *adrar n Ighoud* ("Jbel Irhoud" in Arabic and "Ighoud Mountain" in English), south-east of the city of Safi.

Ouachi (2003) uses the fact that paleontological scholars are basically interested in the living entities in the Geological Stage, to link the Ighoud Mountain discovery to Homo Erectus populations. While he states that the geographical origin, the time in which the transition occurred, and the accompanying conditions of the process are not specified, he speculates that Morocco might well be the transition place, because the excavations, according to him, reflect the transition from the Neanderthals to the modern humans some 1.3 million years ago. Based on this hypothesis, the author argues that Morocco was a turning point in the evolution of Amazigh populations and is unique in this respect.

This argument is supported by the fact that the Ighoud Mountain discovery is considered by North African archeologists as the most ancient state from which modern human species developed, naming it the "Logical Man" phase. Furthermore, Ouachi links the Ighoud Mountain discovery to the ancient Moroccan civilization known as the "Attiriyya civilization," known in North Africa between 45,000 and 20,000 BC (Reygasse 1932). The argument of the author is supported by the human remnants that have been discovered in various parts of Morocco, such as Kahf Dar Sultan near Rabat, Kahf Lamnasra in Temara, Kahf Tafoughalt near Berkane in eastern Morocco, and places

surrounding Smara and the western Sahara, as well as in the larger North Africa and the Great Desert. Such remnants are also reported to have been discovered in Egypt, the north of the Arab Peninsula, and Palestine. Ouachi (2003) concludes that the wide spread of "Atiri humans and their civilization" reflects the strength of these humans and their civilizational supremacy, which allowed them to force their presence in North Africa and the Great Sahara.

The last phase in the evolution of the Amazigh populations is what Ouachi (ibid.) refers to as the "Ipimory" humans. According to him, these humans lived in North Africa between 20,000 and 8,000 BC and did not hinder the relations between Morocco, on the one hand, and North Africa and the Great Sahara, on the other hand. Also known as the "Cage Man" phase, the "Ipimory" phase chronologically followed the Ighoud phase. Ouachi considers this species indigenous because it was clearly delimited temporally and geographically. Discovered through its remnants in 1909 in Algeria and Tunisia and reported to date back to 7,000 BC, this species caused some controversy as to whether it was Oriental, Mediterranean, or Saharan. Ouachi argues that it was indigenous and followed an inward movement because of climate change, which was in process during that period in history. He further consolidates his argument by adding that other human remains were found in North Africa, especially Morocco, and that these remnants go back to the period between 5,000 BC and the beginning of recorded history.

The origin and chronological evolution of the Amazigh populations confirms the indigenous status of the latter in Morocco, North Africa, and more generally the Great Sahara. Ouachi (2003) considers the archeological facts that support this hypothesis, "scientific facts" that support the native scenario so far as the origin of the Amazigh populations is concerned. Indeed, an increasing number of native and non-native scholars are espousing this indigenous thesis. A further argument comes from the fact that North Africa and the Great Sahara have been historically linked by strong and successive natural, human, and civilizational bonds. These facts weaken the Arabic and European scenarios of the origin of Amazigh, as further evidence shows that North Africa is more related historically to the larger African milieu than to the Middle East or Europe. Indeed, the Amazigh dimension is increasingly seen as the one element that clearly differentiates North Africa from the Middle East.

FURTHER MATERIAL EVIDENCE

The native thesis outlined in the previous sections is further corroborated by the discovery of tools in North Africa and the Great Sahara that date back

to antiquity and beyond. These tools range from stone to wooden materials. The nature and type of these tools fitted the various climatic conditions that impacted the successive phases of the Amazigh populations' evolution, as well as their survival needs. In other words, the tools in question evolved in their techniques of production in accordance with the mental evolution of their makers and the extent to which these makers interacted with their surrounding environments (Ouachi 2003). One of the most ancient stone tools that humans in general, and the ones who lived in North Africa and the Great Sahara in particular, used is the trimmed or modified pebbles that researchers on pre-history associate with human progress, hence the name "civilizational" or "trimmed" pebbles.

The so-called Pebble Civilization is said to be characterized by the appearance of primitive stone tools made of pebbles, assumed to contain volcanic materials, hence their historical importance. According to Ouachi (2003), the history of this civilization goes back two and a half million years, and humans used its tools for a long period that extended one million years (ibid.). Remnants of humans who used these tools are considered by archeologists to be the most ancient humans, and the Ighoud Man, found in Morocco as mentioned in the previous section, used this tool (ibid.). These ancient pebbles were also found in other places of North Africa and the Great Sahara, that is, places where the makers of the tools lived.

Other historians, such as Hachid (2001), used the "Pebble culture itineraries" to establish a human and civilizational relationship between North Africa and the Great Sahara. Building on this idea, Ouachi (2003) uses the "itiniraries" to support his main argument that the two regions were related right from the beginning. This archeology-based statement claims that the two regions created similar environments and solid bonds between their areas and the humans who inhabited them, hence producing similar interactions with surrounding nature and yielding similar civilizational products. These readings of the Pebble Culture also include instances where a gradual evolution in the shape and volume of the pebbles played a role in shedding further light on these views. The most important such evolution took the form of a manual axe named "biface" (of two faces), an ancient remnant of the Ashuli civilization according to Ouachi (ibid.).

Bifaces are pear-shaped with two similar trimmed faces, stone tools that evolved from pebbles and that were used for a period that extended between one million and ten thousand years BC, hence marking the Ancient Lower Stone Age. Hachid (2001) and Ouachi (2003), among others, report that bifaces were discovered in several places in North Africa and the Great Sahara, adding that the abundant existence of these tools in these two regions is yet another proof of the existence of a cultural and civilizational bond between these two regions that sustained continuity between them in ancient

times, that is, during the pre-historical and the end of the Ancient Lower Stone Age.[4]

In sum, according to Ouachi (ibid.), each successive archeological discovery highlighted the character of the regions and their contributions to human civilization. What the author underlines is that Morocco constitutes the "cradle" of these discoveries, which then gradually spread to the rest of North Africa and the Great Sahara. For him, the "Pebble Culture" and its evolution forced itself on both North Africa and the Great Sahara and established a strong civilizational bond between the two regions, revealing that the human movement was west-south-east, rather than east-west as hitherto believed in the Arabic and Western literatures. In Ouachi's theory, the relationship between the Sahara and North Africa changed from vertical to horizontal, that is from north-south to west-east and west-south-east.

This is a crucial argument that I use to support the pre-historic origin of weaving and the type of evolution that relates it first to rock inscriptions, then to Tifinagh. It is also crucial for my hypothesis that this history explains the multitude of homegrown interactions between the inhabitants of the Great Sahara and those of North Africa, hence showing the strong African dimension of the Amazigh language, culture, and art, that is between weaving and Tifinagh. The argument also corroborates and consolidates the central thesis of this book, namely that the designs in women's art of weaving may well have inspired the Amazigh alphabet, Tifinagh, the topic of chapter 3.

The Transition from Stone to Agriculture

The evolution of the Amazigh populations from the Stone Age to agriculture is associated with the period between 6,450 and 3,500 BC. From the point of view of this book, the advent of agriculture and livestock is important given its relationship with, among other women-related elements, wool, itself crucial for weaving.

Going back to my major source for this chapter, Ouachi (2003), the author cites several archeological searches and historical studies that document the fact that the Amazigh people practiced agriculture and livestock some nine thousand years back, that is, well before the Europeans in general and the Romans in particular. In addition to agricultural proofs, vegetarian proofs show that the Amazigh people possessed genuine knowledge about agriculture and livestock and practiced them. Ouachi (ibid.) mentions the important discoveries of a 1996 Moroccan-German expedition in the Moroccan Rif region, which include numerous plowing and harvesting tools that go back to the Ibiro-Moori Cage Age, which extended over twelve thousand years. In addition to these tools, other proofs that Ouachi calls "civilizational tools," such as sickles and pierced stone balls and pestles, were discovered during

this expedition. However, the discovery of pottery by this and subsequent expeditions is deemed to be the most important for the themes of this book.

Recent sources document the discovery of pottery all over Morocco and the wider North Africa (Housefield 1997; Erzini and Vernoit 2009) and position it around six thousand years BC. Pottery was used to store food. Indeed, agriculture and pottery have been linked in the history of civilizations throughout the centuries. On the other hand, the production and manufacture of pottery presupposes stability in the sense that the existence of these two elements in each region implies stability (Cohen 2016: 28).

Another element can be added to these strong markers of agriculture: the appearance of villages on a grand scale in North Africa and the Great Sahara.[5] According to Ouachi (2001), villages were first discovered around the Oued Baht (Baht River), east of the town of Khémisset, Morocco. He adds that there are archeological sites on both banks of the river that do not exceed ten kilometers, and that go back to the Modern Stone Age. Among the sites cited by the author is a village-fortress on the left bank of the river looking on the main bridge that links the city of Meknès to Khémisset, and two other sites on the direction of al-Qansarah Dam, called "Halabadou," on the left bank of the river looking on the archeological al-Falous Bridge, close to the remnants of Dar Oum Sultan, and the Dshira site on the right bank of the river. In sum, although geographically restricted, this region has an ancient history of settlements, and it played an important role in Morocco's pre-history. From the point of view of this book, the region of Khémisset is known for its ancient carpet-weaving styles (Mernissi 2006).

A characteristic of the discovered villages in Morocco is, according to Ouachi (ibid.), that they are fortresses, that is protected areas, and close to water, a vital element for human survival. In other words, and in accordance with what has been stated above about stability, the Amazigh villages were conceived as stable and organized human communities with a specific social system because building a village-fortress necessitated considerable synergy and coordination between the efforts of various members of the community. Additionally, the existence of village-fortresses means the existence of human agglomerations in a social, intellectual, and perhaps political framework, as Ouachi (2003) stipulates. Such organized human agglomerations first appeared as stable entities, where animals, like sheep, were domesticated. In addition to a knowledge of agriculture, this point relates to wool and weaving, as will be further explored in chapter 5. Meanwhile, stable life also brings in concern about mysterious things that humans cannot control, such as death. This in turn brings in religion, a word that derives from the Latin word *religare*, itself meaning "relier" in French and "relate" in English. The villagers needed ways of relating their lives to the afterlife. To do so, they created gods and, interestingly, goddesses. This is the topic of the following section.

THE BELIEF SYSTEM OF THE ANCIENT AMAZIGH POPULATIONS[6]

Like any other humans, the Amazigh populations have always nurtured a belief system that brought them solace and peace of mind, and like in all human communities, the Amazigh belief system has, throughout centuries, witnessed stages of evolution. Starting with the phenomenon of belief in invisible forces that control their fate, via some religious phenomena in which magic is mixed with religion, such as animism and fetishism, to the belief that nature is full of good and bad spirits, satans, and jinns, to the belief that there is a spirit or spirits behind every movement of nature's aspects.

Ouachi (2003) contends that in the ancient Amazigh communities, death and burial rituals have always been powerful triggers of faith in the existence of another life, as well as in the idea of eternity and resurrection after death. The death and burial rituals, as well as the types and shape of graves, the sepulchers and their contents, all point to the existence of the idea of eternity in the ancient Amazigh belief system. Indeed, one of the themes that this author developed in detail is the fact that the Amazigh populations used to worship their dead ancestors, a ritual that later developed into the worship of Amazigh kings.

Another foundational phase in the development of the Amazigh belief system, or religion, is the worship of natural forces, manifested in mountains, caves, rocks, water, stars, planets, trees, and so on. In searching for the Amazigh populations' beliefs and religions, researchers use various documents, such as the classical texts by historians like Herodotus, Diodore al-Siqilli, and Yumponois Milla, and/or travel books like those by Hanon and Skilaks, Blinus al-Shaukh, and Strabonn. Such valuable sources constitute strong evidence of the existence of original Amazigh deities that were later appropriated by the Greeks, according to Ouachi (2003).

Thus, Diodore al-Siqilli, for example, stresses the fact that gods were born "on their land," meaning the Amazigh land. This view is supported by the Greek renowned poet Homer. In addition to Amazigh, Greek and Latin archeological inscriptions were discovered in North Africa, as well as remnants of statues of gods and goddesses, temples, and grave epitaphs and vows.

Deities in the belief systems of ancient Amazigh populations were both male and female. Given the central theme of this book—that is, reading women's ancient designs from a linguistic point of view—male deities will be surveyed in this section, while the female ones will be addressed in chapter 4.

The Amazigh Gods

The most important and most widespread Amazigh god is Amun (an Amazigh term roughly meaning "accompanying," probably insinuating that

being accompanied by a deity was a means of protection from all types of evil). This god's head has the physical appearance of a ram. This fact, according to Ouachi (2003), shows that the god Amun was selected from the immediate environment in which the Amazigh evolved, that is, protected villages[7] where they, among other things, groomed livestock and domesticated animals, such as rams.

The same author goes on to say that venerating the ram is one of the most ancient beliefs in Amazigh communities. The rock inscriptions and artistic designs (to be developed in chapters 3 and 5, respectively) are among the most ancient "documents" that refer to this belief. Ouachi (ibid.) considers the origin of Amun to be Amazigh Saharan and locates this origin in a period that precedes the existence of the current Egyptian area called Siwa, where the statue of Amun was erected. The author asserts that the sanctification of Amun occurred at a time when the Sahara had not reached its present-day level of desertification—that is, it still possessed some kind of moisture and was teeming with vegetarian, animal, and human life.

With the advent of the drying-out period, the inhabitants of the Great Sahara were obliged to emigrate in search of areas where water, hunting, and pasture could be found. Some of them headed to the north, that is North Africa; others to the north-east; some moved to the south; and others simply adapted to the new climatic conditions and remained where they were. Ouachi's thesis here is that the communities that headed to the north and the north-east moved with their beliefs and their gods, much-needed on such long journeys. Among the human groups that headed to North Africa were those that transited from there to the Nile Oued (river). Ouachi's thesis is supported by historians' and researchers' views that relate many of the cultural aspects that prevailed in Egypt, especially the religious ones, to the Amazigh Saharan culture on the grounds that the human groups that arrived in Egypt and the Nile Oued passed first through Libya and mingled with the inhabitants there. These journeys resulted in cultural cross-fertilization, that Ouachi (ibid.) locates at the root of the ancient linguistic ties between Old Egyptian (Coptic) and the Amazigh language, both of which descending from the same linguistic branch: the Afro-Asiatic branch of languages. It is this linguistic rapprochement that roots both the ancient Amazigh and the ancient Egyptian cultures in the Great Sahara.

Ouachi (2003) provides further evidence that the god Amun was Amazigh Saharan before he became Egyptian. One such evidence is the morphology of his name, which starts with the Amazigh typical marker of masculine singular nouns /a/. The second evidence is the fact that the word *amun* is found on Amazigh rock art inscriptions that represent rams. Finally, the rams are often decorated with earrings, colliers ('uqud), which, together with

the inscriptions and rock drawings, were found across North Africa and the Sahara. Ouachi (2003) refutes the thesis that the cult of the Egyptian ram-god Amun influenced the cult of the Amazigh Saharan one on the basis that studies on rock inscriptions have proved beyond doubt that these inscriptions preceded the "creation" of the Egyptian god Amun.

The question to ask at this juncture is: Why specifically the ram? This question is related to some of the themes of this book. Ouachi (2003) bases his answer to this question on sexuality, which, like death, has always intrigued humans. For the author, the ram, like the ox, was considered a most lustful animal. Lust is obviously related to the capacity of fertile reproduction, a fundamental concern in ancient human communities. This concern was transferred to the environment, such as agricultural abundance. For these communities, fertility in all domains personified creative divinity that relates to humans. Thus, Khnumu, the Egyptian god of fertility, was represented with the head of a ram (Ouachi 2001 and 2003).[8] The author relates these historical facts to the slaughtering of a ram as a sacrificial rite in the ancient world and even today, the logic being that the offering of the sacrifice and blood-shedding enhanced the fertilization of the soil and rain imploration. This is what explains the Qur'anic story of King Daoud's slaughtering of his kin Sha'ul to stop the drought and allow rain to fall.

Symbolized by the ram, Amun was thus considered the most important god in Amazigh communities. While historical texts mention this god from the sixth century BC to the Byzantine times, Ouachi (2003) postulates that this god is much more ancient and that its existence continued long after the Islamic conquest of Morocco. The author refutes a hypothesis that prevailed until the beginning of the twentieth century, namely that Egypt is the source of the deities that spread to North Africa. Ouachi states that:

> Remnants of rams offered for sacrifice have finally been discovered in al-Karma Cemetery in Nuba [Egypt]. The heads of the rams carry symbols that resemble the symbols carried by the rams of the Atlas Mountains. (Ouachi 2003: 39)

The author goes on to argue that al-Karma Cemetery rams are less ancient than the Atlas ones because, while the latter are contemporary to the Middle Egyptian Empire, the former go back to the Neolithic Age. He adds that in Egypt, the ram (as animal and sacrifice) was not necessarily related to the worship of the god Amun. Camps, a credible French archeologist who worked on Morocco, states:

> The analysis of all the sites of the Atlas Mountains' rock inscriptions that show rams show that this animal was not a subject of worship but of sacrifice. (In Ouachi 2003: 39)

On the other hand, Gsell, the doyen of North Africa's ancient history and a primary reference in the field, states that the worship of the Amazigh ram is not related to the worship of the Egyptian god Amun, discarding the thesis that Egypt was the root of ram-worship. In sum, these authors deny any external influence on the Amazigh people's religious beliefs. This point is very important for the thesis of this book, which capitalizes on the idea that Amazigh women's designs on rugs are expressions of their own beliefs.

Ouachi's thesis is defendable at the linguistic level. The word *Amun* is morphologically related to the Amazigh word *aman*, which means "water" or "waters" because it is plural and has no singular form. More importantly, the vowel at the beginning of the word is a characteristic of the Amazigh language and Old Egyptian, both belonging to the same Afro-Asiatic family of languages, as mentioned in the above sections. Another linguistic element mentioned in Ouachi (2003) is that some words that are derived from the Amazigh root {a m n} from which the word *Amun* is derived include *thammen* (honey), an important nutritional ingredient the Amazigh people often associate with their beliefs; a way of invoking honor or acknowledging the god Amun's blessings upon them. Finally, the human group referred to as *Amuniyyun* ("of or belonging to Amun") originates in Libya, thus confirming their Amazigh origin, as clearly stated in Herodotus's *Book 4* and by subsequent historians. Amazigh Libyans are called "Garamantes" in the literature on the origin and nature of the Amazigh people (Brett and Fentress 1996; Chafik 2005; among others). Ouachi (2003) analyzes the word *Garamantes* as *gar* (from "igr": field) and *aman* (related to "Amun"), the combination of which yields "of the field of Amun" or "children under the protection of Amun."

In sum, the worship of the ram was widespread in ancient Amazigh territories, especially those adjacent to the Great Sahara. Indeed the eleventh-century Muslim-Hispanic historian al-Bakri refers to these Amazigh populations as "abadat al-kabsh" (worshipers of the ram), some of whom moved to the Nile Oued in search of water after the drying-out of the Great Sahara. This long digression brings us again to the native scenario of the origin of the Amazigh, which is linked to the themes of this book.[9]

Another god that the Amazigh people created and worshiped is Osiris. Bates (2004) and Petrie (2013) assert that this god was originally Amazigh Libyan because his name is Amazigh. The root from which the word *Osiris* is derived {w s r} means "ancient" or "old," a meaning the Egyptians adopted as a title for this god and that they translated as "wealthy" or "rich in years." For Ouachi, the original name is *Osiri*, and the last *s* was later added by the Greeks to accommodate the word in their morphological pattern where nouns end in *s*. Griffith (1889) associates the god Osiris with agriculture and plants. The "ancient" aspect encoded in the name of this god is related to Griffith's argument that in many primitive societies the soul of grains was called "the old."

Ouachi (2003) contends that since the Amazigh language is compared to Coptic (Old Egyptian) and not to Arabic in the analyses of the origin of Amazigh deity, this proves that these languages belonged to (a) similar culture(s) whose roots go back to the same "pool"—the Great Sahara—and (b) that the Amazigh Saharan mother culture that prevailed during the beginnings of the Neolithic Age forced its superiority and control over the regions from which the Amazigh-Saharans emigrated to Egypt and the Nile Oued. The author uses these facts to contend that not only Osiris, but also his wife/sister, Isis, and Seth (Satan, evil) were Amazigh deities, perhaps from different clans, who emigrated from the Great Sahara to Egypt.

Other Amazigh gods belong to the Nile Delta and provide stronger proof that they have an Amazigh-Saharan origin (Mercer 1949; Ouachi 2003), prominent among which are Wkh and Ash. With respect to Wkh, Ouachi (ibid.) states that the word *wakha*, still used by Moroccans in their local dialects instead of the Arabic *na'am* (yes) to show agreement is related to the Pharaonic god Wkh, adding that the meaning of *wakha* can easily be extended to "yes, with the blessing of god Wkh," or "god Wkh blesses this agreement," or even "god Wkh will destroy and transform whoever does not abide by their word into ashes." Ouachi's hypothesis may well be true because the word is specific to Moroccans, and it may well have remained in their collective unconscious and reflected in their dialects.

Ouachi (ibid.) also cites three important ancient gods mentioned by Herodotus (*Book 4*) as being of Amazigh origin: Hanibal, Poseidon, and Triton. The three gods are presented as "Amazigh" and were worshiped during the fifth century BC. The author also mentions that the three gods reappeared in an agreement document in 215 BC, a fact he uses to argue that the cult of these gods continued among the Amazigh, who then spread it to their neighbors, namely the Greeks first, then the Carthaginians along the following three centuries. This means the cult of the gods existed before the time of Herodotus and that it continued after Hannibal's time (247 BC–181 BC), and even into the Roman era.

Ouachi (ibid.) also mentions other gods, namely Bakaks, Kurzil, and Anza, in addition to groups of gods known as "Muri" gods, such as the one included in the Mexico Baja paintings. Another important Amazigh god is Seth, who was worshiped in the south of Egypt (also called "Upper Egypt" or "Sa'id" in Arabic). Ouachi (2003) relates this god to Amazigh-Saharan deities. Seth was a brother of Osiris and Isis and a son of Jop (the god of earth) from his wife, Nit (the goddess of the sky), who was married to Seth's second sister, Neftus (goddess of the ocean). This god was surnamed "The Master of Libya," and his center of worship was the Kharja Oasis. Images of Seth were drawn on pottery that goes back to the pre-history period and is still preserved in the site of Nubt. This god was also called "King of Red Earth" (meaning the

Great Sahara) and "King of the Foreigners." Seth was the god of the south (*Sa'id* in Egyptian Arabic).

Bas, another Amazigh Saharan god, was associated with weddings, music, and dance. He is represented with a full face like the goddess Kunt U Qadish. As for the god Ash (God of ash), represented by an animal that resembles a wild dog, he appeared on Egyptian plates since the second Pharaonic family and stood out clearly in the era of the Amazigh twenty-second family as his worship spread over western regions and the oases (Ouachi 2002).

A legend establishes a relationship between the god Ash and the god Seth (Ash was the god of fire). According to this legend, the god Ash was "remnants of fire," with "fire" referring to the Great Sahara (Ouachi 2003). The author goes on to argue that the physical appearance of the god Ash, that of a wolf, may associate his name, "Ash," with the Amazigh word for "wolf," *ushn*, which shares the same root with "Ash" {a sh}. The author mentions another word that may be close to "Ash"—*ishid*—which means "ash" in the Amazigh language. The author concludes that these words clearly point to the Amazigh Saharan origin of the god "Ash."

Significantly, the god Ash was associated with the god Seth in Egyptian legends according to this author. This association is important from the perspective of this book as it reflects the prior close relationship between the south of Egypt, where the worship of Seth appeared, and the Saharan oases, where the worship of Ash was very popular. As such, it grounds Ouachi's idea that North Africa is a geographic, historical, and sociocultural continuation of the Great Sahara and solidifies the main themes of this book.

Ouachi's argument that Amazigh deities have a Saharan origin is supported by his other argument that most of the Delta gods were considered "western"—that is, "coming from the west," and that "the west" of the ancient Nile Delta (also called "Lower Egypt") is Libya, an Amazigh land par excellence. For the author, the ancient inhabitants of the Delta region could not be anything but Amazigh. To further strengthen his point, the author adds that many Libyan Amazigh human groups were pushed to undertake military and peaceful attempts to reach the Delta and join those who had preceded them there.

Whatever the case, the first inhabitants of the Delta Nile region, whether originally Amazigh or human groups that emigrated there in a later period, were greatly influenced by the Amazigh-Saharan culture to the extent that they qualified their non-native gods as "western gods." Indeed, one of these gods occupied a distinguished position, not only in Egypt, but in the entire ancient world: the above-mentioned Amun.

Indeed, as Ouachi (ibid.) states, no one today can deny or ignore that relationships existed between "Tahannou" or "Tamahhou" or "Libu" or "Mashawash" Amzigh groups and Egypt. It is even confirmed that there was a relationship between the religion of ancient Egyptians and that of the

Amazigh, and that this relationship was like the one between the religion of "al-Athiriyyin" (newcomers) and "al-ASliyyin" (the indigenous populations), for example. And as a specific Amazigh element was woven into the Egyptian language, there are various facets of Egyptian religion that have an Amazigh origin (Chafik 2005).

Among the authors who studied this relationship in depth is Wainright (1935). In mentioning him, Ouachi (ibid.) focuses on the work referring to the celestial religion in Egypt that starts from the Old Stone Age, especially the rainy period of North Africa. According to Ouachi:

> The beginnings of Egypt were outside the Nile Oued. As life became gradually difficult in the Sahara, humans started to head towards the Nile and the Sahara borders, and it is in these territories that we find the Badarians' settlements, which date back to the first and second eras before the [Pharaonic] families. Thus, the solid relationships between the Amazigh and Egypt, which were recognized throughout the Pharaonic eras, were tighter and stronger before the dawn of history. (Ouachi 2003: 64)

It is these facts that are, according to Ouachi (ibid.), at the root of Wainright's (1935) discussion of a group of gods considered the oldest and most famous in the Nile Valley, not as fluvial gods, but as gods that originally came from the Great Sahara. As the first life of these gods was related to rain that descended from the sky, they, in his view, were originally celestial—not fluvial—gods. In addition to the sky, there were the mountains, west of the Nile Valley, from which Ash, the god of the mountains during the Pharaonic era, descended. Wainright (ibid.) mentions that the celestial gods lasted until the end of the Pharaonic era. Ouachi (ibid.) mentions other proofs of the relationship between the Amazigh and the inhabitants of Pharaonic Egypt. One of these proofs is the excavation of a magic talisman mentioning the god Seth, fertilization, and their relationship to Libya. Additionally, as mentioned in the sections above, the god Ash, who lived during the period of the fifth family, was called "The Master of Libya," and his nickname was "Master of the west" (that is, Libya or any area situated to the west of the Nile Delta). During the period of the twenty-second family, Seth was a very important god in the eastern Sahara oases. This is further supported by the fact that Wainright (ibid.) cites Amun in his analysis of the relationship between the Amazigh Saharans and Egypt, adding that this god had great importance in Libya. Finally, Wainright also invokes the above-mentioned morphological similarity between "Amun" and "aman."

On the other hand, Ouachi (2003) draws our attention to the fact that the first Amazigh populations did not inhabit only North Africa west of Egypt; they also inhabited the western frontiers of Egypt, whether on its northern

or its southern parts, as well as on its Mediterranean part that stretches to the Nuba region. For this author, the Amazigh people might have formed a big part of the inhabitants of all the Nile Valley in the pre-history, and as such, they constituted, together with the Egyptians, a great pedigree along the ancient history of the region, thus leaving a deep impact on the life and experiences of the Egyptian people. The author cites some of the major facts that led him to believe that the most ancient kingdoms west of the Delta were clearly Amazigh, giving the examples of the emblematic goddess Nit, who lived in the kingdom of S'is. Incidentally, the physical appearance of this goddess strangely resembles some tattoos that Amazigh women in Morocco still carry on their arms, as will be shown in chapter 4.

Indeed, Ouachi (ibid.) states that the kingdom of Sa'is and the kingdom of Amnit in the western Delta constituted the biggest Amazigh part of the region. The author also mentions several ancient Amazigh words that are still used by Egyptians, such as *Hatt* (the oil with which the gods and kings used to be wiped), meaning "leader" or "prince" in souvenirs of the Amazigh leaders nicknamed "Hatiu," as mentioned in the inscriptions on the early Tanitian monuments. This word is still used in Egypt for some restaurants with the meaning of "leader" or "prince." In parallel, the Moroccan Amazigh still call their sons *htta*, which is related to "Hati" or "Hatiu," according to Ouachi (2003), also attested in my own Amazigh dialect used in the region of Azilal.

In sum, Ouachi (ibid.) presents the gods included in this section as examples of Amazigh gods that originated in the Great Sahara before its drying-up and its subsequent spread to North Africa, including today's Egypt. From the perspective of this book, it is important to start from such a strong premise as Ouachi's that not only establishes but scientifically consolidates a native origin of the Amazigh populations. This is not an easy task given the cultural disparities of the ancient Amazigh populations, but it is equally important that most of the arguments used by Ouachi are based on linguistic data, another aspect that relates to the major theme of this book, namely the role of women in the codification of the Amazigh language. This approach highlights the importance of language for the Amazigh peoples. While culture may at times separate them throughout their long history, language has been what unites them. The question to ask at this juncture is: What is the Amazigh language?

THE AMAZIGH LANGUAGE

In this section, I focus on the history of the Amazigh language and the relevant linguistic facts that have cushioned this long history. The historical and linguistic characteristics of the Amazigh language mirror the history of the

Amazigh populations and, thus, relate to the main theme of this book and provide a background to the subsequent chapters.

The Amazigh language is part of the Afro-Asiatic group of languages that comprises the Semitic group and the Ancient Egyptian group. According to Ouachi (2003), the first African languages, from which the Amazigh language branched out, were first spoken in the Upper Paleolithic era—that is during the time of hunting, sniping, picking, and capturing. As such, Amazigh was spoken before the discovery of agriculture and livestock. The geographical dimension and original affiliation of this language make it an African language with African roots.

Solid proof of Ouachi's thesis comes from more recent studies on the historical categorization of human languages. The most-important and most-recognized source is Greenberg (1950 and 1963). Greenberg analyzed and classified some 730 languages used in Africa into four families: Koisan, Saharan Nilya, Cordovan Congolese Nigerian, and Afro-Asiatic.[10] The Afro-Asiatic family is also known as "Hamito-Semitic" in other studies.

According to Ouachi (2003), among the four African linguistic families, at least three were used in the Great Sahara during the Neolithic Age: the Saharan Nilya, the Cordovan Congolese Nigerian, and the Afro-Asiatic. I will address the last one in some detail given its importance for the themes of this book. The Afro-Asiatic family of languages is now an established branch among linguists, anthropologists, and archeologists all over the world. The languages that belong to this family have been subject to study and analysis in several periods of history (ibid.). A characteristic of this family is that, on the one hand, some of the languages it includes are used outside Africa, namely in Asia, and, on the other hand, the human groups that spoke the languages in question had a great impact on the history and evolution of humankind in the sense that they contributed to the construction of some of the world's greatest and oldest civilizations, such as those in Egypt, Babylonia, and Phoenicia.[11] According to Diakonoff (1988), the term *Afrasi* is sometimes used instead of *Afro-Asiatic* and seems to be preferred by some authors, mainly because it clearly highlights and preserves the two components, *Afro* and *Asiatic*.

The Afro-Asiatic, or Afrasian, languages include the language branches of Umu, Kushistic, Old Egyptian (Coptic), Amazigh, and Semitic. According to Greenberg's estimations, the Umu branch is the oldest, and the Chadic and Amazigh are relatively more recent. While Greenberg is credited with this classification, Ehret (1995) is credited with breakthroughs in the explanation of some linguistic issues of the Saharan inhabitants during the pre-historical period, as well as the historical restructuration of the Afro-Asiatic languages. Indeed, Ehret restructured and rearranged the dates of the various linguistic divisions, which allowed him to specify where they first appeared and how old they are.

THE AFRO-ASIATIC BRANCH

The Afro-Asiatic branch of languages was subdivided into several sub-branches. The original geographic homeland of the mother branch and the two fundamental roots that define it as the original Proto language, that is the "Afro" and the "Asiatic" roots, were the north of Sudan and the high plateaus of Ethiopia. According to Ouachi (2003), the first subdivision of this Proto language occurred some fifteen thousand years ago, which presupposes that the Proto language of this branch is much older than this estimated period. Experts estimate that this first language appeared some seventeen thousand years ago. For Ouachi (2003), given that this date coincides with the Upper Stone Age, we cannot go back in studying this language further than seventeen or fifteen thousand years ago.

Some linguists, like Zaborsky (2011), postulate that the first branching of the Afro-Asiatic languages took place in Ethiopia and resulted in two languages: the Umu Ethiopian language and the Eritria language, which gathered the rest of the Afro-Asiatic family. As for the second branching, it concerns the first Eritrean language, from which Southern Eritrean gradually moved to the north in the direction of Egypt. The third branching out of the Eritrean languages occurred some eleven thousand years ago, resulting in two language groups, the first of which headed to the southwest, that is, toward the Sahara, and yielded the Chadic languages. As for the homeland of the second group, it is the Nile area, not far from Egypt. Ehert (1995) calls this group "the First Afrasian Buri," which resulted in three languages: the original Egyptian language, the original Amazigh language, and the original Semitic language. The date of this third branching out is situated in the period between ten and eleven thousand years ago. For the historians of pre-history, this period coincides with the appearance of the first proto-Mediterranean humans, which they associate with the Natufi in Palestine.

The last branching out of the so-called Afrasian Buri languages occurred between eight and nine thousand years ago. Three languages resulted from this branching out: the Egyptian language, the Amazigh language, and the Semitic language. For Ehert (1995), the last branching out occurred in a gradual, chronological way since the original Egyptian branching group is the first language that branched out, after which it became the original Amazigh language, then the original Semitic language. However, Salem Chaker (1992) argues that the Amazigh language appeared between nine and ten thousand years ago, and that it branched out from neither the Egyptian nor the Semitic, although the three linguistic families, Egyptian, Amazigh, and Semitic, overlap in their lexical expressions.

Another hypothesis postulates that the Amazigh language branched out first from Kushistic, then came the Egyptian language, and Semitic was the

last language to branch out. Based on these various views, Ouachi (2003) situates the appearance of the Amazigh language in the time that extends from eight to ten thousand years BC—that is, between ten and twelve thousand years ago. He nevertheless advocates for more research that could lead to a consensus between linguistics and paleontological data, as well as archeological extracts, to come out with a more specific time for the appearance of the first speakers of the Amazigh language.

Whatever the period in which the original Amazigh language appeared may be, it seems to be a very distant era. Ouachi (2003) links this era with the beginning of the Amazigh civilization. The relationship between language and civilization in the case of the Amazigh people seems to underline most of the arguments in Ouachi's work. This relationship pushed the author to ask the following question: Who are the Amazigh people? From the perspective of this book, a second question may be added: What role has the Amazigh language played in defining the Amazigh people?

As a prelude to answering the first question, Ouachi (2003) informs us that in North Africa, human remnants are attested to belong to a period between 3,500 and 20,000 BC, and that they are of two types: the Ipimori or the Ouahrani, who lived between 8,000 and 20,000 BC, and the Caveman, who lived between 3,500 and 7,000 BC. In contrast with many scholars of prehistoric North Africa who state that the Caveman was more "evolved" than the Ipimori, and that the former eliminated the latter, Ouachi (2003) asserts that the Ipimori preceded the Caveman, and he used death-related rituals and practices to prove his point. For example, when the Ipimori wanted to bury their dead, they painted their bones with a red ochre substance, then folded the corpse and buried it in a curved side posture. As for the Caveman, they added other rituals and practices, such as more colors and a variety of the corpse's postures in the grave, which proves that the former set of rituals and practices preceded the latter one. As for language, while it is difficult to know the language used by the Epimoric, the remnants of this language undoubtedly extended to the language of the Caveman. Consequently, it is not excluded that the Ipimori and the Caveman were the first to transform the Afro-Asiatic language to the original Amazigh language, a process that occurred within the framework of contact with the language of the Ipimori.

These facts are used by Salem Chaker (1992) to advance that the Amazigh language became an independent language between 7,000 and 8,000 BC. This hypothesis is congruent with the views that link the Amazigh language with the Caveman based on linguistic research and archeological findings. As the appearance of the Caveman coincided with what researchers call the appearance of the first Mediterranean human, Ouachi (2003) read what researchers call the "Mediterranean human," or the Caveman, or the first Afrasian human, as the human who settled in North Africa between 7,000

and 8,000 BC. All these nominations represent one human whom researchers name differently, according to Ouachi (ibid.). This original human would start constituting his or her own specific language away from the Afrasian language. Consequently, this human, whom Ouachi considers to be the first Amazigh human, lived in the Neolithic Age, with a Caveman tradition that did not have any relationship with the Afrasians, as he would become the first Amazigh human who would speak an ancient form of the Amazigh language, which undoubtedly benefited from its predecessor, the Ipimori language, according to the author.

Within this framework, Ouachi (ibid.) states that the relations between the Great Sahara and North Africa depended greatly on climate change, which led human movement and emigration to regions that had better conditions of life, namely the north, east, and south of Africa. This resulted in long-term social, economic, political, and intellectual changes in the target regions. Indeed, waves of human movements controlled both human mobility and human stability.

Based on these facts, Ouachi (ibid.) hypothesizes that Caveman populations were not foreign to the region. Indeed, he asserts they came from the Saharan regions in the beginning of the drying-out period, and they settled in North African regions, where they mixed and merged with the Ipimori humans. Additionally, since archeological excavations in the Great Sahara, especially its central part, show that the region witnessed considerable human interaction, they were relatively advanced, which fact facilitated the absorption of the Ipimori.

A question forces itself: Why do we hypothesize that the Caveman, and not the Ipimori, were the ones to be credited with speaking the ancient Amazigh language? Ouachi (2003) answers this question based on archeological reasons: The appearance of the Caveman coincided with the emigration of Afrasian and Saharan human groups, whereas the Ipimori, although chronologically older than the Caveman, lived on North African land between 8,000 and 20,000 BC, according to carbon estimations (C14). As the author did not find any trace of them in the sixth millennium BC, he concludes they were "absorbed" by the Caveman. Based on this, Ouachi (2003) considers the Caveman the first speakers of the Amazigh language, who undoubtedly borrowed extensively from the Ipimori language. Another reason is that the Caveman provided innovations in the civilization of North Africa. Most importantly from the perspective of this book is the fact that they left an important legacy of rock drawings and inscriptions, also called rock art, which are still being researched. This art contains various forms that hint to the Amazigh culture, as well as geometric iconographic designs that would develop into the Amazigh writing alphabet, Tifinagh, a theme that will be developed in chapter 4.

In sum, Ouachi (2003) refutes the theories that consider the Caveman and the Mediterranean people to be humans who had migrated from the Near East to North Africa. Instead of these views, the author uses recent archeological findings to postulate that the Caveman and the Mediterranean humans represent a continuity of the Ipimori. He uses this assumption to assert that the Amazigh people did not come from any region other than North Africa and the Great Sahara. For him, the Amazigh people represent the "Maghrebian human," who descended from the Ighoud Mountain and whose appearance dates back to 13,000 BC. In other words, the Maghrebian humans represent the local human who descended from the local upright human, known as the Atlassi man discovered in many regions in North Africa.

Ouachi's scientific findings are crucial for my twin hypothesis that, on the one hand, Amazigh women's weaving art originates in North Africa and the Great Sahara, and on the other hand, there is a relationship between women's weaving designs, rock art, and the codification of the Amazigh language.

Other facts corroborate Ouachi's argument. For example, historical linguistics discards an Oriental origin of the Amazigh language (and the Amazigh people). In other words, linguistic data is increasingly proving that the stability of the Amazigh people in North Africa and the appearance of the Amazigh language on this land may well be related to the emigration movement of the Afrasians from their original homeland in eastern Africa or the Great Sahara and not from the Near East (Ouachi 2003). The author advances that the Amazigh people appeared in history between the dates of eight and ten thousand years BC, after which the language and culture of these people started to be formed. Based on this, it is possible to consider the Amazigh and Semitic languages among the last linguistic bifurcations of Afrasian languages, which means that the Amazigh language is more ancient than all the Western languages, which are derived from a language used in the south of the Caucasus in Asia Minor, during a period between five and four thousand years BC (Ouachi ibid.).

It is important to highlight at this juncture that the singularity of the Amazigh language is deeply related to its phenomenal historicity and that both characteristics are relevant to the themes of this book. Indeed, there is consensus among researchers or even interested amateurs of the Amazigh language or Amazigh topics that the language is very ancient, that its speakers managed to keep it alive in spite of the strong civilizations with which the language had to cohabit, and it is the most important African trait that distinguishes the Maghreb from the rest of the Middle East in spite of serious attempts to folklorize, politicize, or downgrade the language. In recent times, historical linguistics, paleontology, and archeology are helping researchers in these fields to reconstruct the history of the Amazigh language and its relationships to ancient traditions and languages. In this respect, linguistics

has played a considerable role. For example, Gabriel Camps (2015) proved many of his theses based on linguistics analysis. An example, cited in Ouachi (2003), is Camps's detailed analysis of terms related to the notion of Aguellid (king) Masinissa, whose name he breaks into the morphemes of {mmis}, {n}, and {Izza}, the sum of which gives us "son of Izza." This is a case of Amazigh data used as informative reference for deeper cultural analyses.

It is important to note at this juncture that the establishment of historical linguistics, also called *philology* or *comparative philology*, as a science started in the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century with de Saussure, Greenberg, and others. The initial goal was to compare the world's languages, which amounted to two hundred, and gather them into families based on the idea that there is a common "trunk," or original language, in every family to which the other members of the family related.

Like every discipline, historical linguistics has its own methods of analysis, arrangement, and genetic classification of languages, which are used to search for the family relationships between linguistic groups. This methodology is also used to study lexicography and related topics; the sound system of languages (phonology); the roots; the morphemes and derived words (morphology); and the rules and patterns of the grammatical patterns and sub-patterns of languages, as well as agreements between the patterns of word order, the central role of verbs, and the linking of all these elements in sentences.

LINGUISTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AMAZIGH LANGUAGE

The Amazigh language has survived from antiquity and is still used by about twenty million Moroccans, fifteen million Algerians, and three million Tunisians, Libyans, and Egyptians, in addition to the Amaziphones, or people identifying as "Amazigh" in European countries like the Canary Islands, southern Italy, France, Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands. The continuity and remarkable survival of this language is intriguing. The question to ask here is: What is the secret of the Amazigh language's longevity? To answer this question, five main linguistic characteristics of the language are outlined below.

First, as the previous sections show, the Amazigh language has a long history rooted in the Great Sahara and manifested initially on North African land, especially the Maghreb. In addition, historical linguistics and archeological findings have proved that the Amazigh language was formed in a natural way and is not an artificial entity. This fact explains the steady and temporal continuity in the existence of this language. The long history and the contextualizing factors of the language's longevity have been documented in various studies and in various languages (Chaker 1992; Chafik 2005).

Second, the historical longevity of the Amazigh language is matched by its wide geographical aspect. This language appeared and gradually spread over vast geographical areas throughout thousands of years. These areas are estimated to cover nine million square kilometers and range over parts of Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, the Canary Islands, Mali, Niger, Tchad, Burkina Faso, and southern Iberia.

Third, the Amazigh language is characterized by linguistic autonomy. According to Ouachi (2003), although this language has been interacting with several languages that have derived from the Afro-Asiatic family of languages, it has remained distant from them on the synchronic level. Indeed, Amazigh is rarely used by outsiders; historically, non-Amazigh populations have had little reason to learn the language. Additionally, the morphological patterns of the Amazigh language are extremely rich and versatile, which allows continuous derivations of new words from older ones or adaptations to older terms. Indeed, the morphology and syntax of the Amazigh language have been self-derivational despite variety at the lexical and phonological levels (Sadiqi 1997). When languages start borrowing their morphology and/or syntax from other languages, they die, as in the case of Latin, but this is not the case for Amazigh. It is also relevant to mention here that the Amazigh language is historically independent from Semitic languages as the previous sections show. It preceded Semitic languages, despite commonalities at a higher level of categorization within the framework of the Afrasian language family tree. The linguistic autonomy of the Amazigh language is today being further grounded by the continuous process of standardization, and the fact that it is taught in schools as an official language in Morocco and a national language in Algeria.[12]

Fourth, the Amazigh language is related to a historically complex issue of identity. Today, a Maghrebian Amazigh living in a completely different environment would easily self-identify as Amazigh without speaking the language. This is not a modern phenomenon; the languages of North African tribes, as Brett and Fentress (1996) advance, were rarely included in ancient ethnography, which suggests that these tribes were not perceived as linguistically unified. The authors add:

> The ability to speak the Berber language is [. . .] only one of the characteristics of groups who consider themselves Berber or are considered to be so by others. The revival of the Berber language is the most important aspect of the new affirmation of Berber culture—but if we restrict ourselves to a linguistic definition of Berber when discussing their history there will be few groups we can discuss with certainty. (Brett and Fentress 1996: 3)

Yet language remains the most important unifying element in Amazigh communities, as the same authors contend:

> There is consensus among Western scholars in Berber studies that while culture "separates" the Berbers, language "unites" them. The argument that most sources give is that Berbers are defined as people speaking Berber languages [. . .]
>
> [O]ne of the things that sets Berber apart is their language, whose sibilant, aspirated sounds are highly distinct from any other language spoken in the Mediterranean. This was often commented on in the past, and a common myth links the odd-sounding language to the name "Berber."

Along these lines, Ibn Khaldun states:

> Their language is not only foreign but of a special kind, which is why they are called Berber. It is said of Ifriqish son of Aays son Sayfi, [. . .] that he encountered this strange race with its peculiar tongue and struck with amazement exclaimed: "What a *barbara* you have!" For this reason, they were called Berber. Ibn Khaldun. (Ibn Khaldun [1986]: 464)

Most importantly, the Amazigh language was written in various periods of its long history (Ouachi 2003). More than that, it has its own alphabet, Tifinagh, rooted in ancient time periods and surviving although these periods were not continuous. Anthropologists, historical linguists, and archeologists agree that it is one of the oldest alphabets still in use. Material inscriptions on rocks, on steles, and in paintings scattered throughout North Africa, the Great Sahara, the Canary Islands, and Andalusia are telling testimonies.

Fifth, the Amazigh language is a lively and dynamic language that is widely used for daily communication and within family and private and informal contexts. It is important to note here that the use of the Amazigh language to maintain intimate and personal relationships presupposes that this maintenance has mainly been carried out by women, as the strong domains and contexts that have grounded the Amazigh language diachronically and synchronically—that is, home, family, and so on—are historically known to be dominated by women. It is also women who maintained and transmitted the creative imagination that constitutes the core soul of this language, and that continues to constitute the cultural capital of the Maghreb and North Africa. The role of women in this respect is addressed in the following chapter.

NOTES

1. The type of archeology referred to here goes back to the eighteenth century and accompanied the then interest in the Roman legacy.
2. The author reminds us that the Great Sahara represents at least four times the icy turns that Europe witnessed during the last million years.

3. According to Ouachi (2003), other human remnants that go back to four million years were excavated in South Africa, and the most ancient human remnants go back to six million years ago and were excavated in the Sahara south of today's Chad.

4. Hachid (2001) and Ouachi (2003) add that by the end of the Ancient Lower Stone Age and the Ancient Middle Stone Age, or Homo Sapiens, the techniques of stone production witnessed a great evolution characterized by variety and the increase in the types of stone tools, which made them more accurate due to human control over the techniques and style of stone tool production.

5. The phenomenon of founding villages was witnessed in regions that were pioneers in starting agriculture and livestock: Iraq and Egypt.

6. Very few sources addressed the ancient prehistory Amazigh belief system. I have heavily relied on Ouachi (2003), which not only synthesizes his previous work on the belief system of the Amazigh populations, but also focuses on its strengths.

7. It is mentioned in the previous sections that the Amazigh people started to create their first communities by building "protected" villages (fortresses).

8. The Greeks worshiped a god as a ram based on the presupposed fertility of the latter. Furthermore, in the Judeo-Christian heritage, the ram has a dual character: on the one hand, it is sacred as a reference to natural maleness, and on the other hand, it is cursed as a form of Satan (evil spirit), who embodies its representation, and, thus, used to sacrifice a ram to redeem the people's sins. The Qur'anic story of Ibrahim al-Khalil comes to mind here: this prophet is said to have been on the brink of sacrificing his son Ismail when Allah's redemption came to Ibrahim in a dream (Saffat Ayas). [This is the Muslim version of the older, biblical story of Akedat Yitzhak—the binding of Isaac by Abraham preparing him for sacrifice, only to substitute a ram instead, following its appearance as a sign that God had been persuaded of Abraham's sincerity and willingness to obey his command.]

9. Even today, the Amazigh respect, and even revere, the sacrificed ram's horns, which they keep in their homes as a way of attracting protection from the evil eye. According to Ouachi (2003), this belief is a residue of the ancient belief doctrine that venerated the ram.

10. According to Ouachi (2003), Koisan was used by human groups that were anciently called "bushmen." This language is considered today the most ancient language in Africa, and up to now, it has not been displaced by archeological findings. The Saharan Nilya (also referred to as the "Indigo Desert") is believed to come second in terms of seniority in Africa.

11. The term *Hamito-Semitic* was used to refer to this family of languages at the beginning of the twentieth century by Marcel Cohen, but no consensus on the internal structure of the family itself was achieved as some linguists separated the "Semitic" linguistic group from the "Hamitic" one, and some considered them one group. In this book, I adopt the Afro-Asiatic thesis, as it seems to be more neutral and less based on religion-tainted motives that involve Noah's two sons: Sam and Ham. Also, the "Afro-Asiatic" appellation is more adopted among linguists and archeologists than the "Hamito-Semitic" one. In his studies, Greenberg replaced his initial classification

based on "Hamito-Semitic" by his 1963 Afro-Asiatic classification. Ouachi (2003) also refutes the "Hamito-Semitic" classification on the grounds that it is fraught with pro-Semitic ideology. Finally, the Afro-Asiatic appellation is more credible, as it includes some ancient uncontested African languages, like Umu, Kushistic, and Chadic.

12. This standardization has been greatly enhanced by the colossal work undertaken by the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture—IRCAM.

Chapter 2

Amazigh Women Between the Production of Culture and the Production of Knowledge

The historical dimension of the Amazigh people and their language (chapter 1) includes several pointers to the significant roles women played in the construction and preservation of this historical dimension. Indeed, women have never ceased to function as the backbone of the Amazigh communities and the carriers of Amazigh cultural and linguistic identities. However, despite this widely recognized fact, women have hitherto received a disproportionately small share of space in Amazigh studies, especially those that focus on the core or formal aspects of the language. In other words, while some anthropological studies have positioned women at the heart of Amazigh communities, not only as homemakers, but also as saints, military leaders, and artists, very little attention has hitherto been given to their role in the formal construction of the Amazigh language itself. It is high time this gap was addressed. The time is ripe now that the field of linguistics has started to pay attention to women's roles in the stabilization of human languages across the world. An example of this new trend is Bennett-Ayres and Sanson (2020). It is along this new trend in linguistics studies that the idea of this book took shape. Exploring the role of women in the codification and stabilization of the Amazigh language is reclaiming women's linguistic agency in the history of the Amazigh language and culture, given the close relationship between the two. I argue here that Amazigh women could well have created or participated in the creation of the Amazigh alphabet, Tifinagh, through an unconventional medium in linguistics: art. Admittedly, this is not an easy task given the physical nature of the Amazigh alphabet and the lack of documents written with this alphabet. I address the Tifinagh alphabet and its roots in chapters 3 and 4 and women's role in the construction of this alphabet in chapter 5. To prepare the ground for the discussions in these central chapters, and given the fact that Amazigh studies are first and foremost knowledge-based, this second

chapter focuses on Amazigh women, not only as producers of culture, but also as producers of knowledge.

The chapter starts with a section on the difference between the production of culture and the production of knowledge. The second section addresses the role of women in the production of culture; the third section deals with the topic of Amazigh women and religion; the fourth section with women and economic management; and the last section considers women as artists in the history of the Amazigh people and their culture.

THE PRODUCTION OF CULTURE VERSUS THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

Culture has been conceived and approached from different perspectives. It is beyond the scope of this book to go into all the conceptualizations and theories on culture. What is meant by culture in this book is basically the production of cultural symbols.

The Production of Culture: The Power of Cultural Symbols

The expression *production of culture* is relatively new, but increasingly spreading. This production has been analyzed through a variety of prisms, the most relevant of which for this section are the functionalist and symbolic prisms. For the functionalists, society is a system in which parts function to create the whole. In other words, by understanding the essential elements that constitute a specific culture and finding out about the interactions between these elements, one can understand the overarching culture. For the proponents of symbolism in culture, specific symbols constitute a creative subsystem that defines a specific culture in the sense that the symbols help humans to create a culture and make it theirs. Cultural symbols can express a variety of meanings that become significant in the culture that produces them. Thus, designs, forms, colors, animals, objects, and so on have different meanings in diverse cultures. For example, the color blue evokes "freedom" for many Amazigh women weavers, but it does not necessarily have the same meaning in other contexts of the same culture. More importantly, symbols have the power to communicate, connect, or relate specific feelings and images of the self and the other. Although not focused on Amazigh women or weaving, Mernissi (1977) is a pioneer work in exploring the symbolic system of Moroccan women.

In addition to various prisms, the concept of culture has been considered in several theories that range over various academic disciplines. Given the nature of this book, I will adopt a perspective that is sociological but does

not exclude historical, anthropological, and sociolinguistic perspectives. It was Peterson who, in the 1970s, revitalized the concept of culture and made it operational in studying human and social phenomena (Peterson 1976 and 1979; Peterson and Crane 1992). The production of culture perspective was conceived as a challenge to the then-prevailing theory that culture is a "mirror of social structure" (Parsons 1967), a view held by "most Marxists and Functionalists," to use Peterson's (1979) terms.

The production of culture perspective focuses on the ways in which the content of the symbolic elements of culture are significantly shaped by the systems within which they are created, distributed, evaluated, taught, and preserved (Peterson 1976; Crane 1992; Peterson & Anand 2004). Theories of culture have shown that symbols or symbolic elements are crucial in the production of culture. The nature of a culture cannot be understood without understanding the system of symbols that anchor its significant meanings. The concept of *symbols* has always been part of humans' endeavor to understand the environments in which they live. History has shown us that humans understand their environment only when they grasp the workings of its internal systems. Even today, semiotics is a branch of linguistics that focuses on deciphering the internal systems of signs and symbols (also referred to as symbology). In this field of study, historical symbols are prominent because of the significant legacies they carry. Indeed, symbols are still challenging what we know about them and how additional intersections, especially with gender, are opening new vistas of research.

Symbolic elements were studied and theorized on their own before they were analyzed as "symbolic systems" in social sciences, then related to social structures (Leschziner and Gordon 2021). Of these, historical symbols that reached our era are considered powerful carriers of invaluable information that needs to be constantly deciphered, contextualized, and interrogated. The discipline where symbols are of utmost importance is cultural history. However, there is a consensus that theorizing symbols is beneficial in all research. This theorizing presupposes consciousness about history, collective memory, and some history education, the combination of which will help construct the meanings these symbols have been revealing throughout centuries. The way symbols work in cultural history has been examined by several scholars, such as Robert Darnton (1986), who underlined the explanatory power of "the symbolic element in history," as he puts it. According to this author, interpreting historical symbols necessitates the interpretation of the rituals that accompany them, a crucial strategy for the topic of this book.

The cultural history perspective is, indeed, relevant to the present work, which presents Amazigh women's rug designs as symbolic elements of the Amazigh culture. As such, the symbols facilitate the interpretation of the designs and show how they have been shaped by, among other things,

women weavers' daily lives and belief systems. The designs have evolved throughout the history of the Amazigh populations, and they have been very significant, not only in the lives of the women weavers, but also in their communities and tribes, as the last two chapters of this book elucidate. The designs are genuine expressive symbols that are today being recorded as art in scientific research; more details will be provided in chapters 4 and 5. These designs are also significantly used in popular culture, religious practices, and generally in what Peterson (1979) and Crane (1992) call "culture industries." The latter have been strongly attested in the Amazigh movements across the Maghreb (Maddy-Weitzmann 2022; Ennaji 2024).

Contrary to the mirror view, in which cultures are believed to produce stagnant social structures, the production perspective considers culture and social structure as elements in an "ever changing patchwork" (Peterson 1979). Culture is revitalized and dynamized in this perspective, which attracted interest in the latter perspective in other fields of study that transcend sociology per se. From the perspective of this book, the latter perspective is considered from a combination of archeological, historical, and anthropological fields of study. In so doing, ancient symbolic rug designs are revitalized by juxtaposing them to rock inscriptions and the consonants and vowels of the Amazigh alphabet, Tifinagh. Although distant from what the production perspective is doing with modern concepts like "law" or "work," this perspective is helpful in deciphering ancient rug symbols and uncovering their power in bringing writing to Amazigh communities. The fact that this process took centuries does not diminish from the aesthetics of the symbols in question; more focus on these symbols is provided in chapter 4.

In linguistics, symbols are often seen as "signs," the subject matter of semiotics. Semiotics is a branch of study that basically examines and theorizes ways in which signs signify, represent, or refer to specific meanings either within or outside specific contexts. One of the most important theorists in this sub-discipline of linguistics is the nineteenth-century philosopher Charles Sanders Pierce, whose following definition of *signs* is groundbreaking in the field:

> I define a sign as anything which is so determined by something else, called its object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its interpretant, that the latter is thereby immediately determined by the former. (EP2: 478)

The importance of interpretation is equally stressed in Pierce (1883). Without considering the cognitive level, the author underlines the importance of interpreting cultural symbols within their own contexts.

It is within a broad combination of these conceptualizations of the intersection between culture and symbolism that I examine women weavers' rug

designs in chapter 4. For example, I will use Pierce's approach in deciphering artistic weaving symbols because this approach does not prioritize the cognitive aspect of the symbols. Additionally, the type of culture that would introduce my discussions in chapter 5 is Amazigh material culture, and so on. Seen in the long durée, Amazigh culture is not easy to discuss from an ethnographic angle because Amazigh populations are not homogeneous, and generalities abound in the extant ethnographic literature. Examples of such generalities relate to a presupposed fixed and segmentary nature of Amazigh populations, which resulted in hasty conclusions that Amazigh populations have been anarchic. The absence of a "wholistic" view of Amazigh culture is reflected in several social-anthropological studies that focus on specific regions and yield conclusions that are specific to those regions. Examples of such studies include Bourdieu (1991), Gellner (1969), and Hart (2000).

However, interestingly, when it comes to women-related themes, such as house-structure or magic, the "fragmentary" views systematically become wholistic and back-project to antiquity. Surely these views mention the importance of women's roles, but they are generally unsatisfactory, not because they do not espouse a wholistic view of Amazigh culture, but because they reveal a stark invisibility and marginalization of women as real agents in the evolution of Amazigh culture and consider antiquity as a factor of "immobility," which it is not, as recent historians of this distant era have argued convincingly (Fantar and Decret 1981; Cohen 2016). The view I espouse in this book is that, contrary to the general views, a cultural definition of the Amazigh people and language should be applied to the past as well as the present with an eye on the links and evolution of the various phases in it (see chapter 1). Indeed, it is not enough to point to the homogeneous-versus-heterogeneous nature of Amazigh populations and cultures; we need to integrate women's roles in the heterogeneity or homogeneity of the Amazigh population and culture.

Another area in which the role of women has been "assumed" rather than debunked is the Amazigh tribal system. For example, Dessanges (1962) focuses on North African tribes inside and outside the frontiers of the classical period, but his work does not highlight the role of women in the tribes. Similarly, Benabou (1976) focuses on the resistance of Amazigh populations to the Roman hegemony, stressing that this resistance did not happen only on the military level, but also on the cultural (religious) level, but his work did not foreground the role of women in the resistance.

Marginalizing women in works about the ancient history of the Amazigh people did not develop in a vacuum. It is the result of successive heavily patriarchal social systems that have, throughout centuries, been absorbed and integrated by researchers of the Amazigh people and cultures. Indeed, although diverse ways of life and thinking were brought to North Africa by

the Punic, the Roman, and the Arab social systems, patriarchy was a common and deeply pervasive trait of these accounts of the ways of life and thinking of the Amazigh people. On the other hand, the successive waves of invaders in North Africa led to competing theories on the Amazigh people, sometimes highlighting the conquest-related military events and oftentimes presenting the Amazigh populations as marginal. Although Brett and Fentress (1996) mention that a few exceptions represent the Amazigh people as "protagonists in their own history," women are often invisible even in these history-creating instances.

PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE: FEMINIZING THE AMAZIGH LINGUISTIC CANON

The term *knowledge* is defined as:

> The information, understanding, and skills that you gain through education or experience. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

The same source defines *art* in the following terms:

> Something that is created with imagination and skill and that is beautiful or that expresses important ideas or feelings. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

Although based on gendered behavior and dynamics, the theories of knowledge in general, and linguistics in particular, still lack a gender perspective (Bennett Ayres and Sanson 2020). Despite the long history of linguistics, it is remarkable that this discipline started to use gender as a tool of analysis only in the last decades of the twentieth century.[1] Furthermore, linguistics is only recently associated with the transdisciplinary "Women's/Gender Studies," and "Language and Gender" is still an emerging, albeit increasingly strong, sub-discipline of Women's and Gender Studies. This fact explains the quasi-absence of the gender dimension in the major theories of the development of language in human thought. Paradoxically, by considering language as either a cultural-historical or a psychosocial phenomenon, these theories are supposed to highlight the gender element, but they still do not do so by constantly keeping a parallel between the use of language and society's pre-gender bias. The point of intersection between the two "lines" of the parallel is the missed gender aspect.

In the theories that focus on language as a cultural-historical phenomenon, pioneer scholars like Edward Sapir (1921), Franz Boas (1940), and Benjamin Whorf (1956) considered language as a cultural-historical phenomenon and

produced strong views that paved the way to much subsequent theorization on language development. According to Franz Boas, each culture produces its own mental categories and methods of classifying the universe, regardless of the innate mental structure of the individuals living in that culture. According to this view, the difference that various languages display is not the product of differences in human capabilities, but rather of differences in the emphasis on those things that are considered significant and important by a given society. Boas saw that each society develops independently according to its own adaptive patterns to its physical and social environments. Language development, too, was seen as reflective of these general adaptive patterns. Boas's views constituted the basis for the doctrine of "linguistic relativism," whereby no human language can be seen as superior to any other in terms of its ability to meet human needs.

Edward Sapir, Boas's student, further developed Boas's view on language development by theorizing that "the world as experienced is culturally and socially mediated unconsciously by the language habits of the group" (reported in Foley 1997: 197). According to Sapir's view, the fact that specific languages lack abstract concepts is not an indicator of their inferiority, but of the non-importance or non-prominence of these concepts in that culture. In other words, culture imposes conceptual categories only for the phenomena that are deemed crucial or vital in it. From this perspective, the fact that grammatical categories vary from one language to another reflects the cross-cultural variance in thinking of and formulating these conceptual categories.

Benjamin Whorf, Sapir's student, went further to state that the organization of concepts in a specific language follows mutual agreement in a specific culture. Because people "grammatically" talk differently about events predisposes them to conceptualize these events in diverse ways (reported in Foley 1997: 203). In other words, the grammar we use orients us to diverse types of observations, which, in turn, orients us to different interpretations of the observable world.

There is no doubt that the Boas-Sapir-Whorf views reached an elevated level of sophisticated theorization about language development. However, although these theories were primarily based on social, and not on biologically acquired, behavior, they present social behavior as if it were genderless. If we assume with Bing and Bergvall (1996: 1) that gender refers to "behavior that is socially acquired rather than biologically innate," then the way gender identification is categorized differs from one society to another and was/is, thus, directly relevant to the Boas-Sapir-Whorf theories. By not investigating this aspect, the Boas-Sapir-Whorf theories remain "incomplete" in wrongly assuming that language, culture, and biology are coupled in an uncomplicated way and that their history can be modeled in a very simple way.

The absence of a gender perspective is also observed in Antonio Gramsci's theory of language development (Gramsci et al. 1991). According to Gramsci (ibid.), language is central to social thought, and the development of language is shaped by the active role of individuals—for example, creative writers. Gramsci also recognizes that the hegemony of "standard" languages in unified nations is the outcome of collective action, which is congruent with the exercise of political power. However, these individuals, like the ones in the Boas-Sapir-Whorf theories, seem to be genderless. Instead of deepening this aspect, which would have added a new dimension to his theory, Gramsci puts more emphasis on the influence of linguistic structuralism on the development of social thought and its intersection with major currents of social theory.

The absence of a gender dimension in Gramsci's work is a reflection on such absences in the previous subsequent works in the field. For example, anthropologists like Levi-Strauss, linguists like de Saussure, sociologists like Durkheim, and philosophers like Althusser contributed to the formulation of precise conceptions of structure and convention, as well as with clearer distinctions than had hitherto been available between structural (synchronic) states and historical (diachronic) processes and practices. In the 1960s and 1970s, it did, indeed, become common to think that society is structured like a language and that all social action is like speech in being a rule-conforming or rule-violating practice enabled by the resources that social structure, as a sort of grammar, provides. This orientation in thinking distanced the gender perspective from language development even further.

As for the knowledge production that considers language a psychosocial phenomenon, it, too, neglects the gender perspective in theory formulation. The Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1924) was a pioneer in underlining the relationship between language and thinking. His writings emphasize the role of historical, cultural, and social factors in cognition and argue that language is the most important symbolic tool provided by society. The prominence of social factors in Vygotsky's work does not, however, include the gender element, although the latter is social. In Vigotsky's theory, the process of historical development involves human beings changing the ways and means of their behavior, transforming the natural instincts and functions, elaborating, and creating new forms of behavior in a uniform way. Vygotsky's "social beings," the transformations they undergo, and even the transformations related to natural instincts, do not appear to be affected by gender.

Vygotsky's views gave rise to theories of language acquisition. These have centered around the "nurture/nature" distinction or the "empiricism/nativism" one. According to the nurturists/empiricists, all knowledge, including language development–related knowledge, originates from experience and interaction with the environment through reasoning or senses. Behaviorist and

neo-behaviorist stimulus-response learning theories are the best-known examples of these theories. As for the naturalists/nativists, they read crucial knowledge, sometimes involving language development, as innate, genetically transmitted, and not acquired through interaction with the environment. For example, much of the capacity for language learning in humans is "innate," that is, part of the genetic makeup of the human species, and not dependent on any experience that may occur after birth. The two doctrines differ, however, only in the amount of weight they lay on the environmental and innate factors, and neither of them highlights gender as essential in the process.

Burrhus-Frederic Skinner (1957) represents the empiricist view while Noam Chomsky (1986) represents the nativist view. Chomsky's views prevailed, especially after his review of Skinner's book *Verbal Behavior*. Many critics consider the latter review as a genuine cognitive revolution in psychology. Chomsky's arguments on the properties of language, especially its "deep structure" and the fact that it can be used to generate an infinite number of different behaviors (sentences), discredited Skinner's behaviorist approach to language acquisition. According to Chomsky, children learn to speak with apparent ease because they are genetically endowed with biological structures that aid and determine language acquisition. However, neither the nurturists/empiricists nor the naturalists/nativists embodied gender as a tool in their theorization of language development. Indeed, the universalist theories, inspired by Chomsky's thought, distance gender even further from any theorization.

It is important to note that despite the great popularity of Chomsky's views, the social dimension in language development has never been overshadowed in language development theorizing. Among contemporary theorists, it is Jurgen Habermas (1972) who has most consistently underlined language as a strong means of social understanding. Distinctively, he has oriented himself toward linguistic *pragmatics* as developed by John Austin (1962) and John Searle (1969) as the key resource for a theory that has both empirical and transcendental or quasi-transcendental aspects. However, although some of Habermas's work is geared to public/private space, and although these two spaces have traditionally been linked to the (linguistic) behavior of people, he has not devoted enough room for any gender analysis of these spaces.

Parallel to Habermas's work, methodological and conceptual work in the sociology of language explains the distribution of languages (such as the growth of English as a world language) in terms of economic, political, and cultural factors. Substantial work has also been conducted on the creation or revival of languages as elements of a national identity, as is the case with Irish Gaelic, Hebrew, or New Guinea Tok Pisin. Other research has been allocated to how centralized language planning and standardization policies are often resisted, notably in educational settings. A direct implication of these thoughts is the realization that language has "symbolic" as well as

"real" value: As a means of communication, language has an arbitrary mark of identity surplus. Pierre Bourdieu (1991) developed such an approach within the framework of his Cultural Capital Theory. Overall, the sociology of language and other works that loosely relate to it did not consider gender as an analytical tool in the theorization of language development.

In parallel, it was only in the 1960s that sociolinguists underlined the fact that speech styles, or "registers," vary systematically with the social setting and the social status of the speakers and hearers, including their gender. This work uses an approach based on quite different methodological standpoints from the sociology of language: more attention is paid to the "sex of the speaker/hearer" in language use. Sociolinguist William Labov (1966) stands out here and paved the way to further research in the field. From the mid-1970s onward, the terms *sex* and *gender*, traditionally referring to biological and linguistic classifications, started to be carefully distinguished in sociolinguistic theories on language development (Bing and Bergvall 2001).

Scholars in human sciences borrowed the term *gender* from linguistics, investing it with binary features and dualistic tendencies that accompany structuralist thought. These dualistic characteristics have their roots in Christian morality and the notion of relativism in which language is said to affect thought and culture. In 1975, the American feminist sociolinguist Robin Lakoff authored her landmark book, *Language and Women's Place* (1975). Various reactions to this work led to a spectacular outburst of theories and studies espousing gender as an analytical tool. This upsurge of interest gave rise to a new sub-branch in the transdisciplinary field of Women's/Gender Studies: Language and Gender. Indeed, the overall historical environment of the mid-1970s was favorable to the emergence of Women's and Gender Studies: Women's Liberation Movement, the Anti–Vietnam War Movement, the communist/socialist ideology, and so on. The new branch quickly spread to various parts of the world, including the Muslim one. In theory and practice, the Language and Gender sub-branch is a challenge to conventional wisdom about the social uses of language: it poses important questions about how to integrate intellectual inquiry and political action aimed at social change, in the heart of which resides language. In the mid-1980s, the Berkeley Women and Language Group sponsored its first conference, followed by further BWLG conferences in 1992, 1994, 1996, and 1998. These conferences were international in scope and played a crucial role in turning Language and Gender into a coherent and fast-spreading field of intellectual inquiry.

Gradually, the theorization and study of language and gender spread to Europe and then to the Arab-Muslim world (Ennaji 2008; Sadiqi 2021). Such work has demonstrated that gender relations are encoded in linguistic and symbolic representations, normative concepts, social practices, institutions, and social identities, and, thus, they call for more theorizing. This work has

also shown that the language/gender cluster is a primary arena for articulating power as it intersects in complex ways with other axes of inequality, like class, race, and sexuality. This is in line with Duranti's (2001: 11) statement that different conceptual systems represented in different languages would direct their speakers to pay attention to different aspects of reality. This means that language can condition thinking along the language/gender cluster.

In addition to English, other languages such as French, German, Spanish, Arabic and Amazigh are now being investigated from a Language and Gender perspective. This plethora of studies is contributing to the advancement of thinking in the theories of language development. In sum, in Language and Gender and beyond, the master narratives of knowledge production have blurred the gendered, situated, and constitutive self by embodying the latter in unifying conceptual schemes. This means that the production and recognition of knowledge as authentic is related to power, and power and authority in the public spheres is what women have been claiming.

Against this overall background, it is easier to grasp the paradoxical status of Amazigh women when positioned between culture production and knowledge production. Recognized as preservers of the Amazigh culture and language, they are nonetheless absent in the Amazigh linguistic canon. This absence is what this book attempts to remedy with the hope that further consolidating research will follow. Interrogating the status of women in the Amazigh linguistic canon at this moment in history falls within the new feminist approaches and perspectives in and on language and gender. Without going into the details of these approaches, I will only mention the themes that inform the conceptual contents of this book. One such theme is the relationship between language and symbolic power (Bourdieu 1977, 1979, and 1992). Bourdieu's work has been influential in gender sociology through his sociological critiques of male domination. These critiques instigated fresh interest in interpreting ancient archives through a gender lens. Indeed, Bourdieu opened new venues of research that, although still fragmented, cast fresh light on men's and women's roles today and in the distant past. Along these lines of inquiry, this book uses weaving as an analytical tool to explore the link between the Amazigh rug designs and the Amazigh alphabet, Tifinagh.

AMAZIGH WOMEN IN PRE-HISTORY

Cohen (2016) introduces the concept of "invisibilité archéologique des femmes" (2016: 17). Her book is a pioneer in spotlighting the role and place of women in the remnants of pre-history or antiquity, more precisely "from the dawn of the Paleolithic to the Steel age" (Cohen: 18). Although Cohen focuses on Western pre-history, one can detect intersections with Ouachi's

accounts on the life and evolution of the Amazigh people and language (chapter 1). Cohen (2016) is a meticulous and well-documented study of prehistoric women, their representations, the roles they played in reproduction and family, the jobs they performed, and the domestic tasks they engaged in, with an eye on the interaction between the biological and the social, the role of this interaction in the construction of hierarchy between men and women in these ancient times, and the importance of studying antiquity in understanding the construction of gender hierarchy. The author states:

> La Préhistoire est un domaine de prédilection pour aborder l'articulation du biologique et du social dans l'assignation des rôles et la construction des hiérarchies. (Cohen. 2016: 21)

In this quote, Cohen highlights pre-history as the original period in which biological and social role assignments were constructed as "hierarchies." This is a breakthrough in archeological studies, a discipline where gender as an analytical tool is quasi-absent. Interestingly, Cohen (ibid.) did not only go back to the origins of patriarchy in a pre-documented phase in human history, but she also investigated women's ways of reaction and circumvention of this patriarchy, thus underlining their forgotten agency. Cohen also states that reconstructing realities that belong to prehistory is a "special" scientific endeavor because it "mobilizes" both rationality and imagination and requires forms of art that relate directly to science. Cohen's mention of weaving in this context is significant from the perspective of this book:

> Dans les sociétés nomades [les femmes] sont fort mobiles, actives, et se chargent souvent d'une grande part de la subsistance. Elles pratiquent la fabrication de cordes et de paniers, le *tissage* [author's emphasis], la couture, la préparation des peaux, la cueillette. Sur la fouille des sites d'habitation, des traces d'activités techniques, si élémentaires soient-t-elles, témoignent de ces activités, sans préjuger d'autres réputées plus 'viriles', comme quelques-uns des travaux de femmes dans les sociétés des chasseurs-cueilleurs paléolithiques ou celles des paysans néolithiques. (Cohen 2016: 24)

In this quote, Cohen describes women as "very mobile," "active," and "often responsible for a large part of subsistence." Interestingly, she includes weaving, along with rope- and basket-making, sewing, preparing animal skins, and picking, as female activities that were practiced in nomadic contexts. This statement is based on Cohen's reading of traces of these activities in excavations of habitation sites. This a remarkable discovery that puts women's activities in pre-history at the same level of importance as men's, unlike "some of the works of women in the societies of Paleolithic hunter-gatherers or those of the Neolithic peasants."

In sum, Cohen's statement brings about breakthroughs in our knowledge of women's activities in ancient Western societies. It is interesting to note that in the case of Amazigh societies, Ouachi (2003) goes back deeper in human history than Cohen (2016). According to Ouachi (ibid.), Amazigh nomadic communities existed in the Paleolithic and Neolithic eras (chapter 1). The reason Ouachi's findings did not reach Western scholarship may be due to the fact that they were written in Arabic and have not been translated into French or English. Another reason may be gleaned from Ouachi's own view that Western sources gave only lip service to ancient Saharan and Amazigh societies, and that this created ambiguity about the nature and origin of these populations. According to the author, this ambiguity created the "Berber myth," a notion that enhanced interest in the Amazigh as a category in history without clearly delimiting the role of the Amazigh people, including women, in the construction of this history.

These views are congruent with Claudot-Hawad's (2021) "Tuareg myth," constructed on gender difference between the Arab and the Amazigh people. This author refers to the Tuareg women as "musulmanes féministes," an expression the author bases on the matrilineal practices of the Tuareg people. According to Claudot-Hawad (2021), the aspect highlighting the Tuareg matrilineal practices does not only allow the "provincialization" of Europe, but also of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, which are dominant in the history of the Mediterranean and Red Sea. The author's historical perception of the Amazigh people positions the latter not only as "in between" the "motherland" and colonial space, but also at a crossroad for multiple imperial paces and mobilities. These are certainly interesting and complex aspects that consolidate the Amazigh women's historical agency. But to stay within the framework of this book, I will use two main prisms—religion and art—to develop this agency. These prisms are combined in Amazigh women's rug designs, but for the sake of clarity, I will consider them in two separate sections below.

Amazigh Women and Religion

Amazigh women are rarely associated with public religion throughout their long history. According to Claudot-Hawad:

> Depuis Ibn Battouta au moins, et même auparavant, les voyageurs arabes s'interrogent sur la légitimité religieuse du statut des femmes berbères. (Claudot-Hawad, 2021: 7)

> Since at least Ibn Batuta's time [the fourteenth century], and even before him, Arab travelers started to question the religious legitimacy of Amazigh women's status. (translation provided by the author)

However, the figure of the Amazigh goddess is one of the strongest legacies of the Amazigh history and civilization. According to Cohen (2016), archeologists use images and symbols to argue that some ideological and religious homogeneity existed in the Neolithic period, which gave vent to the idea of matrilineal transmission of power. It is interesting from the point of view of this book that Cohen mentions ancient signs and motifs to prove her point:

> Durant toute la Préhistoire et jusqu'à l'aube des temps historiques, l'image de la Déesse aurait été ainsi déclinée en une pluralité de figurines. Les statuettes seraient une source première pour reconstituer l'unité de l'idéologie préhistorique, et les signes abstraits qui leur sont contemporains ont, dans leur expression graphique, conservé le plus souvent des liens avec la réalité naturelle qu'ils représentent. Ces signes, et ces motifs, répétés sur les objets de cultes comme sur les poteries néolithiques, sont les clés d'un langage par lequel une structure cohérente de significations nous est transmise. Par leur déchiffrement, il serait donc possible de mettre à jour la pensée mythique qui est la raison d'être de cet art. (Cohen 2016: 175)

In this quote, Cohen highlights an important pre-historical fact that supports some of the arguments I make in chapter 4, namely promoting the image of the goddess and its importance in Amazigh women's art. Cohen associates the prevalence of the image of the goddess in pre-history to the "plurality of figurines" in the excavations she studied. For the author, the statuettes would be "a primary source for reconstituting the unity of pre-historic ideology embodied in their contemporary abstract signs." This reconstituting is based on the reading of the graphic expressions and, thus, constitutes a reflection of "the natural reality they represented." In other words, the signs and motifs are a key entry to a language that transmits "a coherent structure of meanings, the deciphering of which allows us to update the mythical thought behind this art." Again, Cohen corroborates the anchoring of Amazigh women's art in pre-history. As will be argued in chapters 4 and 5, Amazigh women's designs or motifs are genuine artistic signs that express feminine power, like fertility, sexuality, and so on.

Cohen goes on:

> Les signes que l'on voit apparaître déjà au Paléolithique dans la peinture ou la gravure—vulves, triangles, chevrons, zigzags, méandres, cupules—sont associés à ces différentes figures de la Déesse, et les caractérisent. Ainsi, la 'femme-oiseau' incarnation de la fertilité, est associée sur les poteries et dans les ornements du corps, à des motifs géométriques en chevrons ou en zigzag. (Cohen, 2016: 176)

This quote testifies to the existence of some feminine signs that go back to Palaeolithic paintings or engravings. It is important to signal here that many

of them are also attested in Amazigh women's weaving, such as triangles, chevrons, zigzags, and meanders. Cohen associates these signs with diverse figures of the goddess Thus, the "bird woman," the incarnation of fertility, on pottery and in body ornaments, is associated with geometric chevrons or zigzag patterns. These signs are attested in Amazigh women's art, as will be shown in chapter 4.

The Amazigh people have created and worshiped gods and goddesses since time immemorial. If we go back to the father of documented history, Herodotus (fifth century BC), we can read that Amazigh populations lived in the vicinity of Tritonic Lake[2] and believed in a female goddess, Athina. Ouachi attributes the following quote to Herodotus (Book 4):

> As to those among them [the Amazigh] who live near the Tritonis Lake, they made a sacrifice specifically to Goddess Athena, then to Triton and Poseidon. (in Ouachi 2003: 33)

Ouachi (ibid.) uses this and similar documented facts by Herodotus to advance two interesting hypotheses: first, what we refer to today as "Greek" gods and goddesses were originally Amazigh; and second, goddesses chronologically preceded gods. However, Ouachi adds that it is not clear whether the names of the deities cited in the quote were original names that had been adapted from the Amazigh names or not:

> The names of Athena, Poseidon, and Triton were attempts to translate the meanings of the original Amazigh names. [. . .] Given the difficulty of transmitting the original names, historians settled for retaining the Greek names of deities. [. . .] This is a widespread problem with all the Greek, Latin, or foreign, sources. [. . .] Herodotus makes a difference between the Amazigh and the Greek and insists on the Amazighness of these deities, especially Athena, Poseidon, and Triton. He even confirms that the name of the Amazigh goddess Athena is a Greek name "The one who we (meaning the Greeks) call Athina." This means that there was a specific Amazigh name for Athena that was not mentioned. The Greek historian Herodotus could have helped if he had seen the necessity of providing us with names that the Amazigh gave to the three deities.

Ouachi goes on:

> What is confirmed, though, is that at least in the fifth century B.C., the Amazigh people did not only glorify the three deities, but, as Herodotus states "they organized annual celebrations to Goddess Athena in which virgins were divided into two groups that fought each other with stones and blackjacks, in their way [. . .] the virgins—in line with their ancestors—show their veneration for the national goddess called Athena. The girls who die of their wounds were considered non-virgin. (Ouachi, 2003: 34)

From the perspective of this book, this ritual reminds us of the ancestral "blood-worship" combination that has been documented in the social history of North Africa, the Sahara, and the Mediterranean (Combs-Schilling 1989). In the Amazigh cultures, this combination is often invoked and/or practiced in many ways to chase evil from human bodies, houses, and so on. Likewise, blood-related sacrifice is reported in the literature to be a means of cleansing bodies and places from accumulated sins and wrongdoings and starting anew with a victory of the sacrifice over evil and sin. In present-day Morocco, religious groups, such as *Hmadsha*, continue this tradition in various forms.

Other goddesses, also cited by Herodotus, are considered Egyptian, but based on what has been mentioned in chapter 1, they are of Amazigh origin. These goddesses include Isis, Tafnut, Seth, Neftis, Bas, Kunt U Qadesh, and Nit/Neith.

Linguistically speaking, the name of "Isis" is taken from the Greek pronunciation/spelling. For Ouachi (2003), the *s* at the end of pre-historic and historic names is a linguistic "appendix" that characterizes Greek nouns. For him, the original name is "Isi," and if we take out the vowel, it becomes "Is," pronounced "Izi" in Amazigh. Ouachi states:

> The Egyptian shape is "Ist" or "ast". The goddess is symbolized in the hieroglyphs with the shape of a chaor or a throne, indicating royalty and divinity. The half-circle that means "t" also refers to the feminine. Further, the sitting woman refers to the goddess. Like Osiris, Isis transformed herself from a local goddess in the Delta to a universal goddess that, together with Osiris, conquered the world. (Ouachi 2003: 53)

The cult of Isis prevailed everywhere in Egypt, with the goddess portrayed as a "protectress," and several sources give her credit in this sense. Her sitting posture invokes, as Ouachi (2003: 53) mentions, management and authority, or rootedness, based on the symbol of the chair or throne associated with her. Ouachi concludes:

> As Osiris seems to have an Amazigh-Saharan origin, and Isis was his sister and wife, as well as the mother of his son "Hors", it is implicitly confirmed that she, in turn, was Amazigh-Saharan. [. . .] It is not excluded that the Amazigh female name "Izza" is related to this goddess. "Izza" is among the most common names given to Amazigh girls. It also seems that the name GLD [King] Masinissa means "mmis n Izza" (son of Izza), with the meaning that his mother was called "Izza" [. . .], the letter "s" is a linguistic appendix in the Greek language. (Ouachi 2003: 61)

A second Amazigh goddess is Tafnut (in Amazigh, "moisture" or "wetness," meaning "light rain" or "dew"), worshiped in the Delta in lower Egypt.

Badge (cited in Ouachi 2003) considers the root from which the name of this goddess is derived, namely {t, f, n}, an Amazigh-Saharan root of a name, as it contains the Amazigh feminine letter *t*, itself related to *tifaw* ("morning," related to "dew").

Another Amazigh goddess is Neftis, daughter of two gods, Seb and Nug, and sister of Osiris and Isis, as well as sister and wife of the god Seth. This goddess played a significant role in the Osiris legend and was a companion of Isis (Ouachi 2003). Neftis represented twilight or very early night. Her role was to help the dead to surmount the forces of death and burial. The author also mentions that this goddess is represented by a woman symbol in hieroglyphs. She is also an Amazigh-Saharan goddess known as the "mistress of the house," who had the role of managing family relationships with Osiris and Isis.

Two other two goddesses are cited in Ouachi (2003): Kunt U Qadesh and Nit/Nieth. The first was the goddess of love and beauty, as well as of the moon. She is represented by the body of a completely naked woman standing on a lion with a disc and a crescent moon on her head, fixing a "relationship" with the moon. She holds lotus flowers and a mirror in her right hand, and two serpents in her left hand. More importantly, this goddess is always represented with a full face, like the god Bas mentioned in chapter 1. One of the British Museum exhibitions shows a painting where this goddess is called "Knt" with the Amazigh feminine *t* and *k* or *g*, a characteristic of the Amazigh pronunciation of the root {k, n} or {g, n} from which the words *Ignna/agnna/agenna* (primarily "sky," but also "clouds") are derived.

As for the goddess Nit or Nieth, she is the most ancient Egyptian goddess of Amazigh-Saharan origin. She was worshiped in Sa'is city (Sa al-Hajar), west of the Delta. She was the goddess of hunting, and she bestowed her attributes and characteristics on other goddesses that were represented by her. Ouachi (2003) reports that her name is mentioned in the writings of all past and present eras. Likewise, her name is inscribed on the monuments of the most ancient historical eras in Egypt. More than that, her most ancient symbols go back to pre-history and are represented by a shield and two arrows, indicating her status as goddess of hunting. She is represented with a green face and green hands because she was considered the "soul of earth" who bestowed her blessings generously on pastoral groups. From the point of view of this book, it is important that she is shown with a spindle drawn on her body to indicate that she gave women their weaving skills (Ouachi 2003). The idea that weaving has a religious and spiritual origin is very important from the perspective of this book, as will be shown in chapters 4 and 5.

Because of her status and importance, Egyptian queens were named after her since the dawn of history (for example, Nit Hatb and Huritb–Nit). Historian Mercer, cited in Ouachi, worked on the life genesis of this goddess in

his book *The Eastern Libyans*. He is reported to have stated that the goddess Nit was:

> a goddess of Amazigh origin, who conquered Egypt since the most ancient times. (in Ouachi 2003: 60)

Ouachi (ibid.) relates the name of this goddess with a Moroccan expression that is still in use: *nnit*, to confirm or reinforce a statement. The word is used in both the Amazigh and Moroccan Arabic (Darija) languages. The author does not exclude the Amazigh origin of this word or that it is related to the goddess Nit. He also uses the current meaning of this word to stipulate that the name of the goddess was used in ancient times to testify to the truth of pronounced statements. Perhaps the most Amazigh of all the goddesses cited by Herodotus and confirmed by subsequent historians to be Amazigh are Tanit, Ifriqia, and Olisuwa.[3]

WOMEN AND ART

Chapters 1 and 2 include hints that art as "symbolic expression" existed on the Amazigh-Saharan lands in antiquity and that it was related to spirituality and weaving. Cohen (2016) confirms this fact in her account of pre-historic women in the Western world, detailing specific links between women, religion, and art in its multiple manifestations in the family, society, and culture. Cohen (2016) locates the origin of Western art in the ancient Paleolithic Era and highlights the presence of animals alongside that of women and men in this art (Cohen 2016: 64). These ideas are broadly congruent with Ouachi's (2003) interpretation of ancient images of deity as consisting of both animal and human traits. Ouachi associates some of these traits with human imagination and artistic creation. Before going further into Ouachi's and Cohen's descriptions of ancient art, it is important to mention here that for the purposes of this book, the capacity to create art in antiquity provides a valuable entry to a more transdisciplinary exploration of the meanings of these artistic expressions. Interestingly, Cohen states:

> [D]ès les débuts de l'art du Paléolithique supérieur, le symbole féminin (un schéma en triangle représentant une vulve) coexiste avec la représentation réaliste. (Cohen 2016: 66)

Cohen situates the feminine symbols, such as the triangle diagram, which represents the vulva, at the beginnings of the Upper Paleolithic art. These "realistic representations" are abundant in Amazigh women's art. The

"triangle," the "circle," and the "diamond" are, indeed, abundant in Amazigh women's artistic designs on rugs, and their interpretation is easily relatable to sexuality and spirituality, as chapter 4 shows. Equally important is the fact that both Ouachi (2003) and Cohen (2016) invoke an ancient pre-historic association between, on the one hand, fertility, sexuality, and reproduction, and, on the other hand, symbolic expressions. The association of women-related symbolism with fertility also transpires from the interpretations of Amazigh women's rug designs, as will be shown in chapter 4. Additionally, the possible duality between the masculine and the feminine in women's rug weaving is important but not directly addressed in this book, as I focus more specifically on the codification aspect of the Amazigh language. However, it is relevant to mention here that a categorization of some Paleolithic signs and shapes by Leroi-Gourhan (cited in Cohen 2016) highlights the duality of masculine and feminine symbols and underlines their parallel evolution from "concrete" to "abstract" during the Paleolithic Era and the importance of this evolution in the history of art (Cohen 2016). For Leroi-Gourhan (cited in ibid.), dots, lines, and diverse signs have masculine and feminine meanings related to animal sexuality. He groups geometric signs into two categories, as Cohen explains:

> Les signes géométriques sont regroupés en deux séries : d'un côté, les figures ovales, triangulaires, scutiformes, pectiniformes, en grilles de glaviformes dérivent de la figure d'un corps de femme ou du sexe féminin, de l'autre côté les signes à rameaux, en bâtonnets, en doubles lignes, en séries de points sont des représentations symboliques de l'homme ou du phallus. | [. . .] Leroi-Gourhan emprunte à Freud une lecture symbolique des lieux et des espaces de la grotte: 'les murs auxquels on se laisse glisser [. . .] représentent des corps d'hommes debout. Au contraire, des lieux fermés, étroits, creux (boîtes, coffrets, chambres, cavernes) seraient des symboles du sexe féminin. (Cohen 2016: 77–78)

In the above quote, Cohen groups the geometric signs in two series: the first one includes the oval, triangular, scutiform, and pectiniform figures, in glaviform grids, all of which representing a woman's body or female genitalia; and the second group includes branches, sticks, double lines, and series of points, all of which being symbolic representations of a man's body or the phallus. The author cites Leroi-Gourhan, who borrows from Freud a symbolic reading of the places or spaces of the cave: "the walls on which we let ourselves slide" represent the bodies of standing men, and "the closed, narrow, hollow places, such as boxes, cabinets, rooms, or caves" represent the female sex.

I am using this duality as a way of anchoring weaving symbols in pre-history.[4] This anchoring is stressed by Cohen (ibid.), who mentions "vegetable fibers," "cords," "weaving," and "sewing" as pre-historic female activities

par excellence. While the focus of this author is on what we broadly refer to today as "the West," Ouachi's (2003) focus is rather on the Great Sahara and North Africa and covers eras that precede the eras covered by Cohen, as stated earlier in this chapter. Ouachi makes it clear that in pre-history, the human movement between North Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Great Sahara was active. In this regard, Cohen states:

> En mettant à jour une abondante production textile et l'importance du rôle des femmes dans l'usage de ces techniques, nous avons mis en lumière un aspect jusque-là ignoré. (Cohen 2016: 139)

Cohen's highlighting of the existence of "abundant textile production" attests to the importance of women's role in the use of textiles. This is an aspect of women's lives in pre-history that has been neglected in history books, according to Cohen. An important conclusion that Cohen's book brings us is that pre-historic art was not only masculine:

> La définition de l'art paléolithique comme un art 'viril' a longtemps été donné pour une évidence. On a voulu y reconnaître un art initiatique (difficulté et danger de s'aventurer dans les cavités, symbolisme de la grotte) réalisé par les hommes, pour les hommes: un art des grands chasseurs (thèmes animaliers, réalisme, connaissances des formes et des attitudes des animaux); un art magique (magie de reproduction du gibier/fécondité humaine), et une expression privilégiée de la libido masculine, à travers les différentes silhouettes, figures ou symboles de femmes que l'on y trouve. Aujourd'hui, ces certitudes se fissurent: l'hypothèse d'un rôle des femmes dans la création des œuvres artistiques paléolithiques, ou au moins de certaines d'entre elles, est envisagée. (Cohen, 2016: 142–43)

Cohen asserts above that Paleolithic art cannot be defined as only "virile," meaning masculine. According to the author, this art has long been given as evidence of the great hunters (animal themes, realism, knowledge of shapes, and animal attitudes), a magical art (magic of game reproduction/human fertility), and a privileged expression of the male libido through different silhouettes, figures, or symbols of women. Cohen states in the above quote that these certainties are crumbling, and advances the hypothesis that women played a great role in the creation of Paleolithic artistic works, or at least some of them. In sum, this is an important statement from the perspective of this book: it attests to the existence of female art in pre-history and thus confirms Ouachi's statement that women, and maybe more, the Amazigh language, were, indeed, in use since the Paleolithic Era, and maybe before. For example, all the themes mentioned by both authors exist in the Amazigh rug designs: the animal theme (how animals lived and how they were used—for example, their wool), spirituality, agriculture, and so on. On the other

hand, women's ancient art may just as well be peculiar to humans since time immemorial. Cohen (2016: 149) cites the example of Australian indigenous populations in this respect.

Although these and similar statements indicate that the most ancient activity of Amazigh women is weaving, what we have on this activity is tradition/identity-linked. For example, anthropologists, ethnographers, and sociologists see in the activity of weaving the production of markers of historicity and the survival of the Amazigh people and culture, emblems of specific tribes, markers of identity, and so on (Chafik 2005). For the public, rug designs are part of the national folklore. To my knowledge, the designs have not been analyzed by linguists for linguistic purposes. This brings about the basic question with which this book started: What is the relationship between the ancient designs and the Amazigh language? This is a legitimate question because the rug designs contain lines, triangles, diamonds, circles, and so on that also appear on ancient rocks across the Sahara, North Africa, and the Mediterranean. More than that, the designs appear in the Amazigh alphabet, Tifinagh. Interestingly, it seems the rug designs have been evolving only superficially. To explore this and other related questions, I will first use chapter 3 to focus on Tifinagh, then chapter 4 to focus on the rug designs, and end with chapter 5 to pull together my findings and argue that women's art is at the root of the codification and stabilization of the Amazigh language.

NOTES

1. The disciplines of history, literature, sociology, and psychology fare slightly better in this respect.

2. The Tritonic Lake is described in several ancient texts as a large body of water in southeastern Algeria and southern Tunisia (North Africa). In modern times, this lake is referred to as "Shott al-Djerid."

3. Of these goddesses, Tanit will be focused on in chapter 4 given the striking resemblance between her shape and rug designs.

4. Cohen uses this duality to deepen our understanding of men-women relationships, an interesting theme that, however, is beyond the scope of this book.

Chapter 3

The Amazigh Alphabet, Tifinagh

The Amazigh alphabet, Tifinagh, is one of the most ancient alphabets that humans have created. It has artistic and linguistic roots that go back to prehistory. In chapter 4, I link these two characteristics of Tifinagh to a similarly ancient female art and means of expression: weaving. The artistic and linguistic combination that defines the Amazigh alphabet is unique, albeit poorly known. Indeed, Tifinagh has received very little institutional attention mainly due to the systematic marginalization of the Amazigh language and populations throughout history. Available information allows us to speculate that Amazigh art is as ancient as Amazigh populations and that it was initiated in North Africa and the Great Sahara. This information also tells us that women participated in the creation of this art through, among other things, weaving. While chapters 4 and 5 bring us closer to this weaving, as well as its designs, meanings, and role in the codification of the Amazigh language, this chapter brings us closer to what could be material manifestations of weaving: rock inscriptions and the Amazigh alphabet, Tifinagh.

ROCK ART INSCRIPTIONS

"Amazigh rock art" is an expression that refers to the abundant pre-historical and historical inscriptions that were painted or engraved on rocks or funerary and/cultural monuments across North Africa and the Great Sahara. Relatively recent anthropological studies and archeological findings on rock art have been unveiling crucial gap-filling information about the Amazigh people, as well as their culture and language. From the perspective of this book, which seeks to highlight the history of writing in Amazigh and the role of women in it, rock art is significant, because first, women's weaving is art; second,

because, like rock inscriptions, it is ancestral; and third, because both weaving and rock inscriptions display designs that share intriguing similarities in shape and style.

There seems to be a consensus among travelers, missionaries, archeologists, historians, anthropologists, and researchers in related fields that inscriptions on rocks are abundant in North Africa and the adjacent Saharan regions, especially Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, with more specific findings in southern Algeria and the Atlas Mountains in Morocco (Hachid 2001; Ouachi 2003; Skounti 2003). The sources also agree on both the ancient history and the Amazigh origin of the rock inscriptions. Most of these ancient and modern sources associate the inscriptions with Amazigh nomads and way of life. The consensus on the utility of these inscriptions for Amazigh studies is often accompanied by the difficulty of dating and relating them chronologically. From the perspective of this book, the heterogeneous character of the inscriptions does not hide their "graphic" aspect, that is, their intrinsic link to codification or writing. This association attracted a few premodern and modern researchers in history and/or archeology who, with the increasing breakthroughs in technology, have advanced our understanding of the inscriptions, their chronology, and the patterns of graphic relations between them. New terms such as *technology of inscriptions* bring in new techniques and new procedures for interpretation and explanation in the case of painted or engraved inscriptions. Such breakthroughs have considerably advanced epigraphy studies on the Amazigh language and opened promising venues of research in linguistics. This chapter deals first with the state of the art in this domain, then discusses the idea that inscriptions are "written" language.

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH ON ROCK INSCRIPTIONS

Although rock inscriptions are understudied, present research in this field is very promising. This research may be qualified as a combination of two major approaches: inventory-based studies and analysis/interpretation-based studies. Thus, for Hachid (2001), an Algerian historian of pre-history, rock inscriptions are more numerous than ancient inscriptions and are distributed over the entire Amazigh territories from the Mediterranean to the Sahel. This author focuses on the Libyco-Berber sites and spans the pr-historic and historic Ages. She stresses the fact that some inventories of ancient inscriptions go back to the Punico-Roman period, such as the corpus of Abbey J.B. Chabot (1940) and the collection of Lionel Galand (1966). From the perspective of this book, pre-history is an age that preceded writing and covers the Paleolithic, the Mesolithic, the Chalcolithic, and the Iron (metal) Ages. In this section, the term *antiquity* is used to cover the most ancient pre-history: the

Paleolithic, the Neolithic, and the Metal Ages. According to Hachid (ibid.), the areas where Amazigh rock inscriptions have been attested to are immense and mirror the extent of the population spread and population movement that created this art. This author deplores the lack of funding for rock art research, and ascribes this to colonial and postcolonial ideologies that ruralized and marginalized the Amazigh language and culture (Hachid 2001; Sadiqi 2014).

As for Skounti et al. (2003), there is a relationship between the rock inscriptions on which they worked and specific aspects of the activities of the inhabitants of the regions where the inscriptions still stand in defiance of time. For example, the authors relate the inscriptions found in the region of Azib n Iqqis in the Moroccan High Atlas to the process of harvesting. For example, they consider the discovery of the remnants of plants and wild vegetation that used to grow in abundance in this part of Morocco a consolidating factor in this respect. Another such a factor comes from linguistics: some Amazigh words that belong to the register of agriculture have kept the same meaning they used to have in the Roman language, Latin, such as the *ifilu* ("thread"), which they associate with the Latin word *fil*, which has the same meaning, or *agru* ("frog"), which they relate to the Latin-French word *grenouille*, which, again, has the same meaning. This phonological similarity is used by some researchers to advance the theory that originally Latin influenced Amazigh (lexically, and thus conceptually), but archeologists like Ouachi (2003) refute this theory on the basis that Amazigh is more ancient than Latin.

Ouachi (2003) cites classical texts confirming that North Africans practiced agriculture and livestock well before the Romans and that agricultural knowledge was transferred from the Amazigh people to the Romans and not vice versa. This author mentions that the Romans saw the necessity to translate a book written in Amazigh by al-Buni Makon in which various plants and types of grains were listed together with ways of using them well before the Romans entered North Africa. Ouachi (ibid.) adds that the Romans, particularly, and the Europeans in general, benefited from this book, which circulated widely and continued to be adopted by them until the Enlightenment period.

In these and similar research, rock inscriptions seem to be genuine means of meaning-making. As such, spotlighting remnants of ancient rock inscriptions is a legitimate venue of research that will compensate the lack of the Amazigh language and culture's visibility in the pre-historical accounts of North Africa and the Great Sahara. Although often fragmented and/or biased, these representations remain highly informative sources.

Research on rock inscriptions in North Africa was mainly initiated by archeologists. With respect to Amazigh sites, this type of research is relatively recent and deeply marked by colonization and independence. The colonization period established institutions and laws regulating archeological

searches, and the independence period continued the institutionalization of the discipline with attempts to decolonize it. While the first moment focused on the Greco-Roman period, the second one shifted to the Libyco-Berber period. In Morocco, for example, institutes, ministerial departments, and individual efforts led to significant archeological work on and discoveries of Amazigh rock inscriptions. Individual endeavors include Chabot (1940), Galand (1966), Rodrigue (1999), Pichler (2001), Pichler and Rodrigue (2001), Ouachi (2003), and Skounti et al. (2003). Pichler and Rodrigue produced a detailed analysis of inscriptions from the Foum Chenna site in Morocco. Ouachi mentions inscriptions and rock drawings in the Moroccan Atlas Mountains, Algeria, Libya, as well as the Great Sahara, all of which demonstrating the activities of the inhabitants of these regions.

However, Skounti et al. (2003) constitutes one of the best accounts of the history of rock inscriptions in Morocco. Their book *Tirra* (the Amazigh word for "writing") is the fruit of a collaboration between a linguist, an archeologist, and a museum curator, and it is considered the first study of its kind. This study covers the area going from the High Atlas to the extreme south of Morocco, an archeological domain very few researchers have covered in totality (Hachid, postface to the book).

While acknowledging the French work on archeology in the Maghreb, Skounti et al. (ibid.) underline its "colonizer" aspect, essentially motivated by a search for ancient links between the colonized countries and the Roman Empire, as a way of justifying colonization. In this endeavor, they destroyed remnants that preceded the Romans and the ones that followed them:

> L'archéologie était liée, de manière quasi-congénitale, à la connaissance orientée de cette antiquité dont on se réclamait en partie, le projet colonial. (Skounti et al. 2003: 20)

For Skounti et al., archeology was linked, in an almost organic way, to the specific knowledge of an antiquity that was partly claimed by the colonial project. The authors consider archeology more reliable than anthropology when studying rock inscriptions because the latter discipline is said to be "drowned" in what they call "sciences du patrimoine" (heritage sciences). To remedy the imbalanced situation between archeology and anthropology, Skounti et al.'s fieldwork involves no less than thirteen rock art sites in Morocco. This work was carried out by a research group called "Groupe de Recherche sur les inscriptions Amazighes du Maroc" (GRIAM), whose main aim was to address the history of writing in Morocco. The group was created in Paris in 2000 within the so-called Parc National du Patrimoine Rupestre (National Park of Rock Heritage). The goal of the Parc was to study the issue of the beginning of writing in Morocco (étudier la problématique des

débuts de l'écriture au Maroc [Skounit et al., 2003: 32]). In 2001, the group produced an inventory of all the Libyco-Berber inscriptions in Morocco, whether pre-historic or belonging to the Cave Age. The fieldwork and subsequent analyses of the rock inscriptions covered what the authors refer to as "painted" and "engraved" rock art within a time frame that extends back to antiquity or pre-history.

Interestingly, the authors' analysis is framed within what they call "le contexte archéologique" (the archeological context) of the inscriptions, with the aim of singling out possible contiguities with other remnants of ancient times, such as ceramic and lithic (stone-related) structures, and Palaeontologic remnants, such as tumuli (burial mounds), campings, (nomadic) itineraries, natural environments, and any indications that help establish chronological periods. It is important from the perspective of this book to mention that the authors capitalize on specific sociocultural and overall political contexts in their analyses and interpretations. For example, they start with the premise that a consideration of rock inscriptions inevitably depends on archeological and historical clues of the periods in which they appeared, ways in which the inscriptions were used/attested, as well as any possible evolution of the inscriptions in question.[1]

ROCK ART: THE CONTEXT

Part of reading rock inscriptions is addressing their historical and geographical aspects, which is framing them historically and geographically (Skounti et al. 2003). One way of doing so is using iconology, a method of interpretation in cultural history and the history of visual art (Levine 2013).[2] Iconology uncovers the cultural, social, and historical background of themes and subjects in the visual arts and symbolism. While rug designs, images, and the symbolism they carry seem to fit in this method of analysis, such an approach may meet with challenges, given the fact that the geographical areas where the artists (the weavers) originate and the time frame that separates them from the twentieth-century breakthrough in iconology are immense and may threaten the coherence and homogeneity of the findings. Indeed, the diversity and regionalization of the inscriptions are issues in which archeologists, historians, and linguists need to develop further research cooperation. The temporal scope is also large, as the inscriptions may and often do correspond to different historical periods that extend from Paleo-Amazigh, via the end of antiquity, to barely a few centuries from today, an immense spatial and temporal domain in which sequence needs to be determined.

Additionally, rock art inscriptions cannot be examined outside their iconographic context (their representation by pictures or diagrams), a hint

that artistic rug designs as picture representations or geometric lines may constitute such a context. Granting that this view is valid, traditional, or conventional, pictorial material may be associated with similar signs (in this case, rock inscriptions), and this association may be important in the interpretation of the rug artistic images and rock artistic signs. Furthermore, artistic images or symbols may illustrate or be related to the natural environment, religion, or meaningful legends. Indeed, the natural environment conditions the localization of the rock art sites and explains the reasons for human occupation of a specific region. When an inscription of rock art is complex, which is often the case, knowing the overall framework can shed substantial light on how to decipher it. In the case of rock inscriptions, they led archeologists and linguists to relate them to Amazigh writing: a remarkable finding.

In this respect, Skounti et al.'s 2003 book *Tirra* ("Writing" in Amazigh) is the first book that focuses specifically on the roots of the Amazigh writing system. Starting from the inscriptions found in the ancient Amazigh sites referred to above as "Libyco-Berber rock art sites," the book localizes the chronological landmarks that help tell the story of Amazigh writing. Skounti et al. delimit two main periods in their research: a period anterior to the inscriptions and a period contemporary or posterior to the emergence of today's Amazigh writing. In total accordance with the Algerian rock inscriptions' specialist Hachid (2001), the authors situate the origin of Amazigh writing in the period around the end of the second millennium BC. A relevant note in this regard is that Cohen (2016) situates the appearance of *tissage* (weaving) in antiquity, which is well before the appearance of inscriptions and of writing. This fact is crucial for the main argument I make in the book, namely that Amazigh women's weaving is an artistic expression that preceded the Tifinagh alphabet.

Skounti et al.'s contextualization of *Tirra* invites more scrutiny of the latter. Indeed, as rock art does not only include dots and lines, but also images, the Amazigh alphabet may be better understood if we include epigraphy, the latter being in accordance with the reference to the inscriptions as "rock art."

Epigraphy in Tirra

Skounti et al. (2003), as well as Hachid (2001), mention the Taouz site, in the Ziz Valley (southeastern Morocco), as containing paintings of schematic tanks that can be associated with the "alphabetical" inscriptions belonging to a Libyc alphabet. Additionally, Hachid (ibid.) mentions Joseph Iliou as the first archaeologist to associate images (in this case, a tank) with an inscription:

> Joseph Iliou avait déjà repéré un seul et unique cas (à ce jour) dans les Monts des Ksour, où un char schématique était associé à une inscription dont le rattachement *alphabétique* n'a pu être déterminé. Le site de Taouz serait

> le second cas d'association connu d'un char schématique à une inscription. (Skounti et al. 2003: 32)

In this quote, the authors state that Joseph Iliou had already spotted a particular case (to date) in the Ksour Mountains, where a schematic tank was associated with an inscription whose alphabetical connection could not be determined. The Taouz site would be the second-known case of association of a schematic tank with an inscription.

Two factors may guide the strong graphic relationship between the Amazigh alphabet and epigraphy. The first factor is geography; epigraphic drawings and alphabetical signs coexist on North African and Saharan rocks. This coexistence facilitates the categorization of the shapes into images and signs and allows comparisons between the two in specific regions. The second factor is periodization, namely that the categorizations need to be identified with a recognized period or stage in the general chronology of the rock art in which they appeared. For example, the categorizations that accompanied the period where horses and chariots appeared, and that also coincided with a time when giraffes existed in the Sahara, will be different from those in which camels or ostriches appeared (Skounti et al. 2003). Consequently, an inscription associated with a warrior wearing a typical wide tunic with bitriangular feathers in his hair and holding a javelot would be more ancient than the one associated with a warrior clad in a "seroual" (North African wide trousers) and brandishing a sword (ibid.). Hachid (2001) sees a clear chronological link between the antilopine, typical of the Tazina style that goes back to antiquity, and the line with five characters associated with it. This period largely preceded the Paleo Berber, during which writing appeared, another supporting fact for the thesis of this book.

However, Lhote's work shows that the so-called Tazina style period needs to be distinguished from the Tizana style. While the first belongs to the prehistory of the Moroccan Atlas and Algerian Mountains, the second existed up to the most recent periods of the Saharan rock art, in as far away as the meridional Sahara. This is the only explanation for the case of the inscription Tisserfine, which cannot be associated with any engraving of the so-called Tazina Stricto Sensu Period, but it can be associated with an antilopine of a posterior age, whose style and technique (a polished, incised line), however, reveal a certain ancient period. Chronology is relative without attempts for more precise dating in the anterior periods. Archeologists admit that direct datations on rock are challenging, but research is improving, and the methodology in this field is said to be promising:

> Quant à la fouille et à la datation radiométrique du tumulus situé dans l'environnement immédiat des inscriptions, elles peuvent aider à établir la

> datation d'un ensemble archéologique quand il est absolument cohérent; c'est le cas à Iweln (Aïr) où gravures rupestres, habitat et armes en métal in situ, and tumuli (mound), sont en parfaite concordance de temps, appuyée par des datations radiométriques en âge calibré. (Roset 1974: 49)

In the above quote, Skounti et al. highlight the importance of the excavation and the radiometric dating of the tumulus (mounds) that contained the inscriptions. The coherence of the excavation and the radiometric dating helped the researchers establish the dating of the inscriptions, which they refer to as "archeological ensemble." Their endeavors were successful in the case at Iweln (Aïr), where rock engravings, habitat, and metal weapons in situ, as well as timuli, were found to be in perfect concordance in terms of radiometric dating.

In Taouz, numerous engraved schematic tanks, which are more recent than paintings with flying galloping chariots of the central Sahara, were discovered. As in the Saharan Atlas and African West (south of Morocco and Mauritania), the Taouz schematic tanks are said to be associated with the oxen, or bovine, a context that precedes the last period of the Libyco-Berber rock art. However, in the Saharan Atlas, the first horses appeared with schematic tanks and metallic arms (daggers). The same thing is attested in the south of Morocco, where the association "tank-dagger" and "tank-axe" is clearer according to Simoneaux (1968) and Wolff (2004).

With respect to contextualization, the common practice in the archeology-based texts I consulted is that graphic clusters are determined by the territory in which the Amazigh populations who used them lived, as well as the nature of the population movement (sedentary or nomadic) and its place along the centuries-old existence of the tribes (Hachid's postface to the Skounti et al. book). Hachid adds that such studies prove that non-homogenous alphabets did exist within the same region, particularly in contact zones, but that sometimes they also existed in the heart of a given territory and

> pourraient expliquer à elles seules l'existence d'alphabets non homogènes à l'intérieur d'une même région, notamment dans les zones de contacts, mais parfois aussi en plein cœur d'un territoire donné. (Skounti et al. 2003: 57)

The author goes on to state that atypical cases in the same site or region may be explained in many ways; for example, Saharan inscriptions are found in regions where nomadic communities moved successively and left traces on the same rocks:

> Au fils des siècles, les témoignages des auteurs arabes (Ibn Hawqal, El-Bekri, El-Idrissi, Ibn Khadoun . . .) montrent qu'une région aujourd'hui habitée

> par une tribu peut se retrouver un siècle plus tard la propriété d'une autre, ou encore, que le territoire d'une confédération peut aussi abriter une tribu différente qui l'a précédée sur les lieux. (Hachid's postface in Skounti et al. 2003: 61)

Hachid cites here the testimonies of Arab authors, such as Ibn Hawqal, El-Bekri, El-Idrissi, and Ibn Khaldoun, to make the point that regions were not inhabited by the same tribe all the time and that the territory of a confederation sheltered different tribes in specific moments of history.

Cultural exchanges are bound to take place in such cases, as the same author states:

> Les échanges culturels entre populations voisines représentent le cas le plus banal: sur des sites de l'Atlas saharien, les inscriptions amazighes sont mêlées à des inscriptions en hébreu, là où subsiste encore le souvenir de tribus anciennement berbères juives. Ici, une tribu étrangère à un territoire pouvait venir y pâturer, à la condition de payer une taxe (pratique connue des Touaregs), là, les inscriptions situées aux alentours d'une oasis, différaient de celles de nomades en transhumance. (Hachid's postface in Skounti et al. 2003: 61)

In such cases, and as the above quote states, cultural exchanges between neighboring populations represent the most banal case. Thus, on sites in the Saharan Atlas, Amazigh inscriptions are mixed with inscriptions in Hebrew, where the memory of formerly Jewish Amazigh tribes remains. Here, a tribe foreign to a territory could come to graze, on the condition of paying a tax (a practice known to the Tuaregs), and the inscriptions located around an oasis differed from those of nomads on transhumance. The same author asserts that contrary to hieroglyphs, which were accessible for the political and religious elites, Libyc writing, whether Saharan or North African, was popular among the Amazigh populations regardless of their social or religious status. In their analysis of Libyc signs, Hachid (2001) and Skounti et al. (2003) focus on specific sites and single out homogeneity in some scriptural fields in which groups of characters are recurrent. Hachid (ibid.) adds that inscriptions in the Central Sahara site display a recurrence of two-line characters, a fact that fits the description of a "homogeneous sequence." Interestingly, Skounti et al. (2003) note that pictures preceded the inscriptions, a statement that will be used later in this book to hypothesize that rug designs preceded the alphabet Tifinagh. In this regard, Hachid (in Skounti 2003: 62) states that the archaeological studies of engravings in the region of Iwelen (Northern Niger) show that the appearance of "schematic" (pictorial) tanks was contemporary to the final "caballine phase"—that is, the phase when men held their horses by the bridle. As such, the author adds, the appearance of pictorial forms preceded

the appearance of rock inscriptions. The author consolidates her important statement by a similar interpretation of the Saharan Atlas findings:

> Dans l'Atlas saharien, l'étage caballin succède à celui des chars schématiques. Or, les gravures figuratives de cet étage évoquent l'iconographie des stèles de l'Antiquité datées du IIIe siècle avant au Ve siècle après J-C, comme la stèle d'Abizar. (Hachid's postface in Skounti et al. 2003: 62–63)

The author here advances the hypothesis that in the Saharan Atlas, the caballine stage succeeded that of schematic tanks, but that, however, the figurative engravings in this case evoke the iconography of the stelae of antiquity dating from the third century BC to the fifth century AD, such as the Abizar stele.

Skounti et al. (2003) use a linguistic argument to state that Libyc inscriptions showing characters based on lines (caractères à trait) are more ancient than what archeologists have hitherto assumed. For example, they cite Aghali-Zakara (2001) who states that Libyc writings go back to the time of the Amazigh king Micipsa (138 BC). For both Skounti et al. and Hachid, who worked on Morocco and Algeria, respectively:

> Au Tassili (Algérie) et dans la Tadrat Acacus (Libye) se reproduisent les mêmes cas que celui d'Azib n'Ikkis: il s'agit d'inscriptions peintes, associées à des chevaux et des chars dans un contexte parfaitement homogène (qu'il s'agisse de la technique, de la thématique ou de la patine, voire d'un cas exceptionnel de superposition). Ces inscriptions ne peuvent qu'avoir l'âge de leur contexte, un contexte daté historiquement par le cheval et le char et les personnages bitriangulaires qui les conduisent, c'est-à-dire après 1,500 ans avant J-C (date de l'apparition du cheval et du char) et avant 1,000 avant J-C, soit dans les derniers siècles du IIe millénaire avant J-C. (Hachid's postface in Skounti et al. 2003: 63)

The author cites Tassili (Algeria) and Tadart Acacus (Libya), as well as Azib n'Ikkis (Morocco) as places where painted inscriptions are associated with horses and chariots in a perfectly homogeneous context. For the author, the inscriptions can only be as old as their context, a context dated back historically by the presence of the horse and chariot and the bitriangular figures who drive them, and going back to 1,500 BC (the date of the appearance of the horse and chariot) and before 1,000 BC.

It is now attested that whether in the Atlas region or in Central Sahara, there are hundreds of inscriptions that have existed there since time immemorial. These are determined by Skounti et al. (2003) as "two to three generations of inscriptions" (65). The authors highlight the sites of Foum Chenna and Oued Meskaou, which are good examples in this respect. Geographically, these sites are obligatory passages to the acquisition of water destined either

for circulation or for pastoral purposes, hence their importance in comparing the findings.

Such archeological findings constitute a methodology to be followed in the quest for larger gatherings of rock inscriptions in North Africa and the Great Sahara. Painted and engraved rock inscriptions are, indeed, attested in these regions, and Hachid (2001) mentions hundreds of them. One of the objectives of the "Groupe de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes" (RILB) is to gather, transcribe, classify, and interpret thousands of Libyco-Berber rock inscriptions. Work on this front is abundant and is progressing (see, for example, Beaune 2008, Chaker 2002, Galand 2001, Camps 1996, Aghali-Zakara 1993, Drouin 2001, Camps 1977). With respect to the main theme of this book, it seems that today there is a consensus among archeologists that the image of horses in movement, pulling chariots, belongs to ancient (Paleo-Berber) times (Hachid 2001); that is, it preceded the "non-image-based" inscriptions. The author adds that in places where these inscriptions are abundant, a collaboration between archeologists, especially the ones who specialize in pre-historic art, and linguists is necessary and that technological advances are an asset to be used in this respect.

On the other hand, Beaune's (2008) idea that pre-historic art may be used to support linguistic and non-linguistic facts resonates with the main argument of this book, namely that women's ancient art may well be used to explain the shapes of the Amazigh alphabet, but before going into this topic in the following chapters, a consideration of some available analyses of rock art is an appropriate prelude.

ROCK ART: ANALYSIS

The analysis of rock art is based on a four-step methodology. The first step consists of gathering inscriptions from previously located sites. The second step consists of gathering all the inscriptions. The third step is sifting through the inscriptions and singling out individual signs. And the fourth step consists of grouping the signs that share specific characteristics into "graphic clusters." The clusters may share aspects that relate to shape, meaning, or a specific private or social setting. Taken together, the four steps help the researcher interpret the signs. This four-step methodology requires several types of knowledge; salient among them is a combination of archaeological and linguistic knowledge.

In practice, this methodology is exemplified by the collaborative work of Skounti et al. (2003). Ahmed Skounti is an archeologist, and the other two authors, Abdelkhalek Lemjidi and El Mustapha Nami, are linguists. The three authors started by localizing thirteen sites, which include Chenna

Tizouline, Taznakht, Taouz, Meskaou, Loukaimeden, and Waramdaz. Of these sites, Taznakht is also the most reputed region for weaving, as I will discuss in the final chapter. The authors then built a preliminary statistical corpus of inscriptions based on an inventory of notes/files. In their search for chronology, they considered the style of the inscription, the technique, and the represented objects. In the absence of recorded dates that would guarantee absolute chronology, the authors relied on the contextualization of the inscriptions by relating them to their geographical environments and comparing them with other inscriptions. In this process, both archeological and linguistic approaches are used.

As for the findings that Skounti et al. came up with, the first thing they noticed is that the inscriptions are characterized by a combination of vertical lines, circles, curves (very frequent in Libyc writing, but also in weaving), and abundant geometrical forms representing recognizable forms like horsemen or camel men. It is interesting to note that the authors link these forms to their "alphabetical" nature:

> Les sites ayant livré des inscriptions rupestres s'étendent sur l'ensemble du contexte spatial des gravures et peintures rupestres du Maroc. Ils englobent ainsi les montagnes du Haut Atlas, le Pré-Sahara et le Sahara [. . .] et peuvent se prêter à une analyse alphabétique. (Skounti et al. 2003: 39)

According to the above quote, the sites that have yielded rock inscriptions extend over the entire spatial context of the rock engravings and paintings of Morocco. This means they include the High Atlas Mountains, the pre-Sahara era, and the Sahara era. The authors add that, these inscriptions lend themselves to alphabetical analysis.

Overall, the authors managed to localize sixty signs and qualify them as "homogenous scriptural graphic forms," a total of 133 lines, and 865 characters (Hachid's postface to the book). According to Skounti et al. (ibid.), vertical lines going from the bottom up are the most ancient and the most attested to in the sample of inscriptions they gathered and studied. Building on these findings, the authors singled out no less than forty different characters, which they combined in several "graphic clusters." The clusters are presented as groups of signs that share similar physical or environmental characteristics. The authors argue that these clusters may serve in understanding the diachronic evolution of the Amazigh alphabet (this will be developed more in chapters 4 and 5). For the purposes of this chapter, the association of Amazigh inscriptions with rock art or paintings and engravings on rocks is of extreme importance. This association is worked out in the author's book through a search for the relationship between the inscriptions as signs and clusters and the potential messages they may contain. To address this issue,

the authors raise the following questions: To what extent can we establish a relationship between an inscription, a drawing or a painting, and a potential coherent meaning? What are the limits within which such a relationship can be established? And what is the role of the overall environment?

In their attempt to answer these and related questions, Skounti et al. (2003) gathered inscription signs from some Moroccan archeological sites, established them in a typology of context-based clusters, worked out a chronology of the signs, and finally interpreted their findings. For example, their work on one of the sites, the Foum Chenna site, yielded thirty-six different characters from a total of 402 signs. These characters are interpreted by the authors as the thirty-six components of the Amazigh alphabet. Hachid, who wrote a postface to their book, reacted to this finding in the following way:

> Notons que ce chiffre se rapproche du nombre de caractères de l'alphabet anciennement dit "occidental" (33 signes), utilisés par les dynasties maures dans l'Antiquité, un alphabet plus à l'écart de l'influence des cultures punique et romaine que les régions numides. (Hachid's postface in Skounti et al. 2003: 56)

This figure is, according to the authors, close to the number of characters in the alphabet formerly known as "Western" (thirty-three characters), which was used by the Moorish dynasties in antiquity. Interestingly, as the authors underline, this alphabet further removed them more from the influence of Punic and Roman, more than Numidian regions. This testimony is important from the perspective of this book, as it attests that already in antiquity and well before the arrival of the Greeks and Romans to North Africa, Amazigh populations had what may be considered an "alphabet." Contextualization, whether historical, geographical, or both, is key in the author's process of analysis and interpretation, and contextualization is what brings in the overarching environment, specifically the community and women.

Interestingly, Skounti et al. (ibid.) locate the meanings of inscriptions in the combination of their physical nature, their environment, and the sum of the nature and environment of the signs with which they constitute clusters. In other words, the characteristics of the signs contribute to the deciphering and reading of the inscriptions of which they are part. The association may be extended to the archeological and natural contexts of the sites. Some of the associations based on the archeological analysis of the thirteen Moroccan sites from the High Atlas include camels, arms, discs, circles, stellas, and symbols. Some of these associations are straightforward, such as those related to funerals; others need to be juxtaposed or superposed, and yet others are necessarily speculative.[3]

Based on this and previous work on inscriptions, Skounti et al. (2003) singled out two main clusters: The first cluster they attribute to the Libyc

domain, a Nordic (septentrional) domain that is rich in characters and in which the High Atlas looms high. The second cluster is associated with one site, Foum Chenna, in the region of Zagora, located at the gate of the desert. Like the first cluster, this second site is also rich in characters, a fact that the authors, interestingly, qualify as an alphabet that associates dot-based and line-based characters.

Another interesting fact about the authors' conclusions is the similarity between the regions of Zagora and the Saharan Atlas. Indeed, in the south of Morocco, there are several heterogeneous alphabets or ancient forms (Libyc) that may be translated into more recent forms. In the Saharan Atlas, two alphabets are linked to more recent forms: Libyc and Saharan. Given the geography of the Moroccan rock art and the surrounding provinces, saddling the North African and Saharan regions, the mixed inscriptions may reflect the zones of contact and exchange between populations. This view is corroborated by Hachid (2001), who notes a "shared line" between the Nordic (septentrional) rock art and the High Atlas region. These two zones do not, however, contain homogeneous populations, as atypical and mixed elements are attested both at the level of rock art and at the level of inscriptions. The complexity of the inscriptions in Chaif Ould Atia (Aousserd) and Foum Chenna attest to this: in a homogeneous context, these two sites possess sequences in which line-based and dot-based characters follow each other in the same line. The same phenomenon is attested in the Taouz site, located in the extreme south-east of Morocco, where the inscriptions are clearly close in shape to the Libyc.

These observations are logical in a geographical context of human settlements over time and space. Indeed, in these regions, situated in the north of the Sahara, historical accounts, whether from Latin authors of antiquity or Arab travelers of the medieval period, signal the existence of constantly moving nomadic tribes and confederations, as well as short reconfigurations of settlements over centuries. On the other hand, as linguists have argued, there is both unity and diversity in the Libyco-Berber writings, a fact that attests to constant population movement, hence the diversity of the inscriptions.

According to Skounti et al. (2003), although admittedly, the association of an inscription with its iconographic context is not an easy domain of research in linguistics, it was used in the study of European languages/alphabets. Thus, for a historian of pre-historic art, a given image is generally accompanied by another one, unless there is an exception that jeopardizes the general rule. As in linguistics, our knowledge of rock art functions with invariants that define unity, and variants that define diversity. Likewise, as is the case for the linguist, the methodology and the results obtained by the pre-historian scholar are subject to the approval of their pairs. To establish an "association," the pre-historian

scholar must go through a rigorous examination of a set of elements that must be in symbiosis in terms of technique of painting, engravings, style, and so on.

Technically, inscriptions resemble the rock art in which they appear. This fact is obtained through meticulous archeological work that involves incision, polishing, or staking polishing (Skounti et al. 2003). The authors also observe that as transitions from one rock art to another took thousands of years, the above-mentioned linguistic and contextualizing work allowed them to figure out the historical moments that differentiate between the gathered signs and clusters and to link the broad phases in the long history of the Amazigh writing system. This work also allowed the authors to establish the indigenous nature of the signs and clusters and argue that if borrowing was at stake in this case, the readings of the inscriptions would not have yielded continuity. This is a remarkable conclusion that shows that continuity is difficult to attest in one specific discipline, hence the adoption of a multidisciplinary approach in this book. In this specific case, the interpretation of the Amazigh rock art inscriptions necessitated a continuous collaboration between pre-history specialists and linguists. So far as the line of argumentation adopted in this book is concerned, the linguistic aspect of rock art brings us to the Amazigh alphabet: Tifinagh.

THE JOURNEY OF TIFINAGH

As the previous sections show, the journey of Tifinagh is a long and unsteady one. Although this journey started in antiquity and witnessed evolution, it has received very little academic and institutional attention. Most of the interest in this alphabet is attested in archeology and linguistics, and the researchers involved in this interest are both natives and non-natives.[4] Two major points of reference are adopted by non-native (European) scholars of Amazigh studies: the Mediterranean point of reference and the North African one.

The Mediterranean Point of Reference

The eastern part of the Mediterranean region is geographically close to North Africa and some parts of the Middle East, which means that trade transactions, inter- and intra- human migration, and interaction between the two regions must have taken place. Knowledge of these facts and the circumstances in which they occurred often facilitate the topics that archeologists, linguists, sociologists, and anthropologists address. For example, Renfrew (1987), an expert in Indo-European languages, asserts that it was farmers, and not simply farming, who moved from the Middle East to Europe via

the Mediterranean, and he used this fact to propose a model of the spread of Indo-European languages in which the linguistic diffusion was parallel to the steady progress of Neolithic agriculture. In other words, according to this author, the geometric increase in the productivity of the land allowed population growth, which gradually expanded westward, displacing or absorbing the Mesolithic populations.[5] This is obviously an older model of immigration in which populations—Semitic speakers, in this case—moved from a heartland outward, that is, from the Arabian Peninsula around the third millennium BC, ultimately outnumbering and absorbing earlier groups like the Sumerians (Renford 1987).

Camps (2008) advances a different model of immigration by asserting that the earliest Amazigh populations migrated from the eastern Mediterranean during the Bronze Age, along with the chamber tombs, the dolmens, and pottery styles acquired in Sicily. However, according to Brett and Fentress (1996: 14), Camps "leans towards the view that the Berbers are entirely autochthonous" in his introduction to the *Encyclopédie Berbère*. The authors add that "the political implications of [this position is] interesting and recalls the debates of the 1930s on the origins of the Etruscans."

Additionally, for Brett and Fentress (1996), connections between the Iberian Peninsula and the Mediterranean islands took place from the fourth millennium onward. The authors (ibid.: 15) cite the existence of "obsidian" (volcanic rocks) from Lipari (an Italian island) in northern Tunisia, as well as the existence of "shell-decorated pottery," which goes back to the beginning of the Bronze Age, and "bell beakers similar to Iberian types of Northern Morocco." The authors (ibid.), as well as Souvillle (1973) and Grébénart (1991), also report that a considerable number of engravings of Iberian daggers and halberds in the Moroccan High Atlas Mountains testify to sustained contacts between the two regions throughout the Bronze Age.

For Western sources, writing in Tifinagh arrived with the first Mediterranean populations in the desert, the Garamantes, around the middle of the second millennium BC. This view is associated with the existence of paintings showing horses in the Fezzan area (southern Libya) and elsewhere. However, Brett and Fentress (1996) think this is a very early date and suggest, instead, that writing in Tifinagh is more likely to have developed in the Tell[6] at a later stage and was learned there by the Garamantes. The authors go on to state that from then on, the evolution of rock inscriptions followed a separate development as, for example, Roman period inscriptions from Gholaia and Ghirza in the Libyan desert are quite distinct from those of the Tell (Rebufatt 1974–1975).

However, Brett and Fentress state that archeological evidence for a consistent movement of people is lacking when it comes to Amazigh populations. The authors add that Afro-Asiatic languages have not received enough study:

> If we examine a map of the Afro-Asiatic languages—the eastern Semitic group, Kushistic, Egyptian and Berber—both the centrality of the Nile Valley and the difficulty of positing the Arabian Peninsula as a 'heartland' become evident. There has never been any suggestion that the Nile Valley was populated from the Arab Peninsula, nor of any major shift in its population. It seems intellectually more satisfying to suggest that the advent of the Neolithic in the lower Nile Valley and the delta area caused a major rise in its population density, and a consequent spin-off to the east and north-west of groups of people who carried the new techniques, and a related language, with them. This would explain the presence of these groups in the Arab Peninsula as well as in North Africa. (Brett and Fentress 1996: 14)

Furthermore, most non-native scholars agree that the Amazigh languages are remarkably similar, which explains their relatively uniform spread across North Africa and that this spread did not occur over a long period. The break between the Amazigh languages and Old Egyptian (related to Modern Coptic) is explained by the physical barrier of the eastern desert, which became increasingly impassable as the Sahara dried out (Brett and Fentress 1996). These authors suggest that the separation of the two had taken place *before* the definitive drying-out between 2,500 and 2, 000 BC.

No evidence for major immigration from these areas is attested, but the continuous arrival of small groups is probable, according to Brett and Fentress:

> Dolmens in northern Tunisia and eastern Algeria recall Maltese prototypes, while late Bronze Age chamber tombs on Cap Bon have clearly Sicilian origins. This is the last "archeological" moment in which the Berbers—or the Berber language could have arrived [. . .] we cannot find "proto-Berbers" anywhere else. (Brett and Fentress 1996: 21)

According to these authors (ibid.), the Libyan language and script were gradually developing into official forms of expression, to the extent that the urban population expressed itself in the Amazigh language and not in Punic. As for Benabou (1976), some texts were inscribed in the ancient Berber Libyc. This author also argues that Libyan inscriptions were generally found in areas where either Punic or Roman epigraphy was also present.

Brett and Fentress (1996) also add that the inscriptions started to come into their own concurrently when funerary traditions started to use the Libyc Berber language, albeit in short texts only. An interaction between Punic and Libyc Berber is also attested to by Brett and Fentress (1996), who mention that several elements of Punic iconography, such as solar discs, palms, pinecones, and so on were borrowed by Libyc Berber from the Punic language. Interestingly, from the perspective of this book, Brett and Fentress note that

in an earlier period, the texts were painted, rather than inscribed, which suggests again that pictorial designs preceded inscription.

As for the native scholars, chapter 1 roots the origin of the Amazigh populations and their language in the pre-historic Great Sahara. I adopt this perspective in this book. Indeed, the long history of Tifinagh explains its complexity in the sense that this script has both an artistic and a linguistic aspects. In other words, Tifinagh has graphic roots that have been evolving, and some studies on this alphabet have been provided in North Africa and the Diaspora, especially in France.

The non-native studies on Tifinagh have certainly provided breakthroughs that illuminate our understanding of the journey of Tifinagh, but with more research being conducted by the native researchers of the region, solid archeological information has provided considerable support for the native origin of the Tifinagh-based Amazigh writing system. The native origin of this alphabet is supported by important information provided by and/or cited in several works. One such piece of information is that Tifinagh inscriptions were discovered well before and beyond the Libyco-Roman zones of influence. Sites that are geographically distant from these zones, such as the Zagora sites in Morocco, revealed a considerable number of Tifinagh inscriptions. These discoveries have rendered the region of Zagora "the center of the Sahara":

> Au Sahara central, nous possédons une chronologie relative du peuplement paléo berbère qui a pu être établie sur la base de celle de l'art rupestre et des fouilles archéologiques ayant livré des datations radiométriques. [. . .] Cette précieuse chronologie nous permet de mettre en relation des inscriptions avec des périodes ou des étages bien définis de l'art rupestre. (Ouachi 2002: 56)

In this quote, Ouachi notes that in the central Sahara, a relative chronology of the paleo-Berber settlement could be established on the basis of rock art and archeological excavations, which provided radiometric dating. For the author, this valuable chronology allows us to relate inscriptions to defined periods or stages of rock art.[7]

The discovered inscriptions were accompanied by other representations painted on the edges of shelters or engraved on the open-air slabs. This writing system belongs to the same alphabet that antiquity historians and archeologists have been studying as part of pre-historic sites for over a century (ibid.).

However, for political and ideological reasons (see chapter 1), work on the Libyco-Amazigh inscriptions that would have led to work on Tifinagh have been neglected for too long in the field of scientific research, and when research started, the Roman zones of influence, such as Mauritania Tingitane, were privileged for a moment in the history of the Amazigh language, then

ever since became again scarce after the 1960s studies of Lionel Galand. Admittedly, this type of research is complex and demanding both in human power and funds. Deciphering and reading the documents couched in consonantal writing is, indeed, challenging. In the following sections, the two aspects of Tifinagh—the artistic and the linguistic—will be addressed.

THE ARTISTIC ASPECT OF TIFINAGH

There is a consensus in Amazigh archeological and linguistic studies that rock drawings, often with figurative and geometric images, and inscriptions, often lines and circles, are means of human expression. The figurative images came first, as the epigraphy studies on Amazigh show. This is summarized in Skounti et al. as follows:

> Rien ne s'oppose à ce que les 'populations de l'intérieur des terres', comme aimaient à l'écrire les auteurs gréco-latins, dans des territoires éloignés des rives méditerranéennes, aient marqué les parois de leurs messages écrits. Ils ne faisaient que prolonger les traditions de leurs ancêtres qui s'y exprimaient déjà par des images figuratives et géométriques. (Skounti et al. 2003: 64)[8]

Skounti et al. in this quote state that there is nothing to prevent the "inland populations," as the Greco-Latin authors called them, in territories far from the Mediterranean shores, having to mark the walls with their written messages. They were only continuing the traditions of their ancestors, who had already expressed themselves through figurative and geometric images.

The use of the Libyan alphabet is incredibly old, as traces of Tifinagh rock inscriptions in the Tadrart Acacus Mountains in southwest Libya demonstrate.

Tifinagh is reported to have been used by the Tuareg tribe, which has survived from antiquity to the present times. Admittedly, various forms of change, including religion, community management, and way of life, have accompanied the evolution of this tribe, but from the cultural perspective, which is relevant to the contents of this book, the survival of this tribe is indeed remarkable. This survival attests not only to the long history of weaving, but also to the pivotal role of women in this art, as well as in the making and preservation of the Amazigh culture.

The Tuareg self-identify as "Kell Tamasheq" or "Kell Tamajeq." They constitute an Amazigh group that has been living in the Great Sahara, southern Algeria, Azawad, north of Mali, north of Niger, southwest of Libya, and north of Burkina Faso. They also self-identify as Maliki Sunni Muslim, hence as indigenous of North Africa, especially the Maghreb. In terms of language use, the Tuareg speak one of the three dialects used in the regions in which they live: Tamajeq,

Tamasheq, and Tamaheq. In terms of way of life, the Tuareg have been nomads since antiquity. They have kept their ancestral way of living mainly due to marginalization by the above-mentioned countries that occupied their land. This also explains the reason for which the Tuareg have been given different names throughout their long history. For example, they were called "Garamants" in prehistory, and "Veiled Men," or "Murabitun" with the coming of Islam. In current times, they are called "the Tuareg." Those of them who inhabit the Ahaggar, or Hoggar (southern Algeria), are also called "Ihaggaren." A major characteristic of the Tuareg is that they trace their origin back to a woman.

The Tuareg Tribes Women

The Tuareg tribes claim descent from Tin Hinan (in Amazigh, "the woman from over there"), whom all the Tuareg (nobles or vassal groups) consider their ancestor. The Tuareg often add 'Kell' to their origin in memory of Tin Hinan's daughter Kella. Brett and Fentress (1996) state that a very credible source, Father Charles de Foucauld, a Jesuit missionary and linguist, was the first to discover a significant oral tradition that recounts the history of Ihaggaren (The Tuareg):

> [T]wo Berber women from the oasis of Tafilalet in Morocco journeyed to the Ahaggar. The first, Tin Hinan, was noble, the other, Takama, was her servant. They found the country empty, although there were traces of previous settlers. . . . Tin Hinan established herself at Abalessa: here she had a daughter, Kella, from whom descend the Kel Rela. Takama had two daughters; from one descended the secondary tribe of the Ihadanaren, while from the other descend the plebian tribes of the Dag Rali and Ait Loaien. Tin Hinan gave the oasis of Silet and Ennedid to the two daughters of Takama, to whose descendants they still belong. In another version of the story Tin Hinan arrived on a white camel, charged with dates and millet, and accompanied by numerous slaves as well as by her servant. (Brett and Fentress 1996: 205)

The Tuareg's claim of descent from a woman is materialized in a huge tomb that is still preserved in Abalessa, a town in Tamanrasset (southern Algeria). According to Brett and Fentress (1996), also citing Reygasse (1940) and Gast (1973):

> When the tomb was excavated, it revealed the remains of an unusually tall woman, about 40 years of age. She lay on a leather-covered wooden bed, with 7 gold bracelets on her right arm and 8 silver bracelets on her left. Beside her lay a Roman glass cup, as well as a wooden cup with Constantinian monogram. A radiocarbon date of 1,480 more or less 130 BP, along with the Roman finds, suggest that the structure was constructed in the second half of the fifth c.: its original purpose may have been simply that of a dwelling like the qsar [lit.

> "palace," but meaning a premodern dwelling] of the pre-desert, subsequently converted to a tomb. (Brett and Fentress 1996: 206–07)

The special status of Tin Hinan explains the fact that matriliny is dominant among the Tuareg, and inheritance, including the inheritance of political power, runs through both the matriline and the patriline. For example, women are the ones who own the tent and control their property, albeit, being constantly on the move as nomads, the Tuareg did not amass substantial material property. Women can also choose and divorce their husbands, thus creating a unique equilibrium in the relationship between the two sexes. Additionally, members of each Tuareg subgroup, or *tawsit*, define themselves as the uterine descendants of a single eponymous ancestress (Brett and Fentress 1996).

Tuareg kinship patterns are complex, and more balanced than their matrilineal ideology would suggest. According to these authors, although women had freedom in and outside the home, monogamy and a woman's freedom to own and dispose of her property were not affected by Islam, but men owned the political leadership of the tribe and did not associate this leadership with women. From the perspective of this book, women's freedom was associated with their ability to learn and teach Tifinagh to their children. They also used this alphabet to write "secret" messages on the sand, which were erased once read (Sadiqi et al. 2009). Today, the relationship between women and Tifinagh is attested in their use of symbols belonging to this alphabet in weaving, henna, and more in cloth-making as a sign of identity.[9]

THE LINGUISTIC ASPECT OF TIFINAGH

Originally, the Tifinagh alphabet was constituted of characters and images. Today, the epigraphic aspect of the characters is reduced. However, the nature of evolution from one form to the other needs further research. Skounti et al. (2003) refer to the totality of the Tifinagh characters, that is, all the forms including images, as "tirra" (writing). They also consider both images and inscriptions as assertive and symbolic rather than functional, with the proviso that the long evolutionary process has not altered this fact. As a writing system, Tifinagh has been used historically, albeit not abundantly. It is reported that it was used in circles of power (Brett and Fentress 1996) and for the tombstones of the tribal leaders, as well as in love letters by the Tuareg.[10]

According to credible sources, such as Hachid (2001) and Ouachi (2003), linguists were pioneers in attesting that writing in Libyc Berber emerged locally and was associated with rock art. Hachid (2003) states in this regard:

> Avant le pudhhnique et le latin, les Imazighen ont pratiqué des écritures, très vraisemblablement là où c'était le plus facile pour eux, là où ils s'exprimaient

> déjà par des images figuratives: là où il y a de l'art rupestre. (Hachid's postface in Skounti et al. 2003: 66)

In this quote, Hachid states that before Pudhhnic and Latin, the Imazighen (pl or Amazigh) practiced writing, very likely where it was easiest for them, as they already expressed themselves through figurative images in places where art could be immortalized on rocks. Hachid's quote affirms that the Amazigh people expressed themselves in images, admittedly before they did so in characters. More importantly from the perspective of this book, the local emergence of the Amazigh language predates rock art, as the author specifies:

> [L]a création de l'écriture [Amazighe] est en liaison étroite avec la caractéristique la plus évidente de l'Amazaghité, où que l'on se trouve, de l'océan Atlantique au Golfe des Syrtes: celle du graphisme géométrique, un graphisme qui apparaît avec la civilisation du Capsien et se continue de nos jours dans les arts traditionnels. La stylisation du graphisme qui a vraisemblablement inspiré l'invention d'une graphie qui deviendra le libyque, ne naît pas avec la période caballine de l'art rupestre, mais bien avant avec la période des protoberbères bovidiens qui peignaient les rochers du Sahara, il y a près de 7,000 ans. (Hachid's postface in Skounti et al. 2003: 66)

For this author, the creation of Amazigh writing is closely linked to the most obvious characteristics of Amazighity from the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf of Sirtes, forms of geometric graphics and graphic designs that appeared with the Capsian civilization and continues to this day in traditional arts. The author advances that the stylization of graphics, which probably inspired the invention of a spelling that would become Libyan, did not arise with the Cablline period of rock art, but much earlier, with the Bovidians (in the Proto-Berber period), who painted the rocks of the Sahara almost seven thousand years ago. When Islam reached North Africa, the Tuareg preserved the Amazigh writing system by fleeing from the Arab conquests:

> Ce n'est peut-être pas un hasard si l'écriture ne s'est conservée que chez Les Sanhadja Touaregs, une grande famille berbère qui a fui les conquêtes musulmanes pour trouver refuge au Sahara central, se trouvant ainsi à l'abri des influences. (Hachid's postface in Skounti et al. 2003: 66–67)

For Hachid, it is no coincidence that writing was only preserved among the Sanhadja Tuareg, a large Berber family who fled the Muslim conquests to find refuge in the Central Sahara, thus finding themselves sheltered from any influence.

The existence of Amazigh manuscripts is further corroborated by Hélène Claudot-Hawad (2021), who advances that medieval Arab historiographers were interested in these manuscripts, mainly from legal or religious points of

view. Likewise, according to Bounfour (2010), several Amazigh texts written in Berber exist, such as the manuscripts of Berber Qur'ans, expressions of faith, or Qanuns (laws), all of which attracted the attention of Arab historiographers. Bounfour (ibid.) cites Galand-Pernet's (1972) identification of no less than twelve such manuscripts in the Rabat Bibliothèque Générale. In the subsequent centuries, more and more such manuscripts were appropriated by scholars in Amazighphone areas other than those inhabited by the Tuareg, like Sous in Morocco, Kabylia in Algeria, Nfoussa in Libya, and Mauritania (Bounfour 2010).

Of course, as with any human language, the Amazigh writing system has, over the course of many centuries, been enriched by borrowings from other languages, mainly Punic and Arabic, but the precedence of the Amazigh system is very important for the thesis of this book, as it suggests its possible link with weaving, a prehistoric activity (chapter 4). The fact that Tifinagh is viewed by some scholars working in the field (for example, Hachid [2001], Ouachi [2003], and Skounti et al. [2003]) as the first phonetic system for writing that humans created during the second millennium BC, that is, before the Phoenician alphabet, is further support in this regard.

Linguistic analyses of Amazigh inscriptions have shown that horizontal lines preceded dots. In other words, experts on Libyco-Berber characters—inscriptions—have used dots as an evolution from horizontal lines. According to Skounti et al. (2003: 38), line-based inscription characters are older than the Saharan dot-based characters, as expressed in their respective alphabets. Indeed, in the history of linguistics, dots are usually categorized as "diacritics" that are used below or above the characters, as the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) shows. In the Libyco-Berber characters, the use of dots has not decreased the number of lines, as the frequency of the latter attests to.

This evolution is expressed by Skounti et al. (2003:) as follows:

1. The line in the ancient Libyc alphabet transited into a dot-based Saharan alphabet, named "Tifinagh Saharien" (Saharan Tifinagh).
2. There was a contact zone between the two alphabets, that is the ancient Libyc and Saharan Tifinagh. For example, the sites that are close to the High Atlas in Morocco use only Libyc characters.
3. A regional phonetic specialization of some characters took place through recourse to characters belonging to various historical periods.

With respect to dots and lines, the authors identify two "ensembles graphiques" (graphic clusters): the one of the High Atlas and the individual characters. The authors identify other sites exhibiting inscriptional phenomena that resemble those attested in the High Atlas. Aghali-Zakara (2001), cited in Skounti et al. (2003), states that the evolution of any alphabet leads

to variables and invariables. This, of course, does not exclude linguistic variables and invariables, whether at the phonetic or lexical level. The same grapheme can, in fact, have one or two phonetic values according to specific regions (Skounti et al. 2003: 39).

TIFINAGH: THE FOUNDATION OF WRITING THE AMAZIGH LANGUAGE[11]

As the history of Tifinagh has received extraordinarily little academic and institutional attention, the potential origins of writing in North Africa are still poorly known. Three scenarios have been suggested: a Middle Eastern Semitic origin, a native origin, and a combination of both in the sense of a Semitic aspect serving as an "improving" factor. The Arab sources favor the first scenario, and the more skeptical ones favor the third scenario (discussed in Chaker 2005). These scenarios are in accordance with the native and non-native perspectives on the origin of the Amazigh populations and the Amazigh language (see chapter 1).

Hachid (2001: 173–90) provides an inventory of all the Amazigh inscriptions in Morocco. One of her findings is that Amazigh writing was not attested at least until the Roman occupation of Mauritania Tingis (40–285 BC) and probably some centuries after this date, adding that beyond this period, there is no trace of writing. This disappearance might be due to the appearance of the Hebrew or Arabic writing systems. But why was this writing system used in parallel with the Punic and the Latin and not Hebrew and Arabic? This will remain an open question.

Various graphic systems were used to transcribe the Amazigh language in different eras.

1. Hebrew, since high antiquity among Berberphone Jews (Levy 2001).
2. Arabic, since the arrival of Islam with the Almohads (1147–1269), especially in Souss for the teaching of religion. More recently in novels, poetry, theater, and cinema.
3. Latin script, since the nineteenth century for transcribing literature and ethnography in North Africa by colonial researchers, and later by national researchers, associations, and certain types of media.
4. Neo-Tifinagh, since 1960, when the Berber Academy magazine in Paris, *Agraw Amazigh*, adapted it to modern requirements (typewriter and later computers).

These various scripts were instrumental in keeping Amazigh writing alive. As such, they have never really been part and parcel of the shape and meaning of the Amazigh script. It is, rather, women's art that did this.

TIFINAGH AND WOMEN

It is important to note here that writing is closely related to the institutionalization of linguistics, whereas art is less so.

While it is difficult to trace women's presence in the creation and/or promotion of language in antiquity because of shortage of records and material sources, two hypotheses may be advanced. The first one is the ancestral relationship between the Amazigh language and Old Egyptian (chapter 1). Indeed, modern linguists have established a linguistic relationship between the Amazigh language and Old Egyptian by tracing them back to the same original family. The expressions *Hamito-Semitic* and *Afro-Asiatic* have been used to establish this relationship, as stated in chapter 1 and earlier in this chapter. Whereas the first expression is based on some religious concepts, the second one is more linguistic. This relationship may be said to be supported by similar forms of writing (Tifinagh and Old Egyptian hieroglyphs). As Ouachi (2003) states, Old Egyptian hieroglyphs and the figure of the scribe are often associated with written language. In the case of the Amazigh language, it is rock art that fulfills this function (Skounti et al. 2003).

The second hypothesis may be stated as follows: There is evidence that women are highlighted in records on Old Egyptian. While renowned ruling queens such as Hatshepsut and Cleopatra fill records and popular imagination, the everyday use of (written) language by ordinary women is not part of this imagination or the records that cushion it. This fact may be extended to the Amazigh language and women. Whereas individual women are highlighted in Ancient Egyptian, a rather collective image of Amazigh women and language may be stipulated. Admittedly, research is needed in this aspect of research in Amazigh studies, but it is interesting that in the case of both Old Egyptian and Amazigh, women and writing in antiquity seem to be associated with writing as drawing, some form of art. Progress in the understanding of ancient Egyptian languages occurred in the second part of the twentieth century. Indeed, Bennett-Ayres and Sanson state:

> In the case of ancient Egypt, it was Champollion (1822) who initiated the study of Egyptian hieroglyphics. (Bennett and Sanson 2020: 11)

In a parallel to the Egyptian language, Tifinagh designs existed in the Sahara at a very early date, and they often accompanied the frescos showing chariots. Although dating is very difficult according to modern archeologists and linguists of the Amazigh language, the earliest securely dated Tifinagh inscriptions from the Sahara come from the fifth-century-AD tomb of an Amazigh queen, Tin-Hinan, mentioned above, where broken pieces of the inscription were used in the construction of the building. Is this a

coincidence? A queen and weaving? This is an open question. Little can be said of the fragmentary inscription used in the construction of the tomb of Tin-Hinan, but it shows the alphabet was already in use in the Central Sahara by the fifth century. The Tuareg language, Tamasheq, is also distinctly different from the Amazigh language of the Tell, with a more elaborate grammar and fewer loaned words from Arabic. The modern Tuareg alphabet, called Tifinagh, is certainly related to the Libyan alphabet of the early years of Roman occupation. Although the morphological relationship between the two is clear, the historical relationship is less obvious.

Furthermore, just as Tamasheq seems to represent a purer, less-Arabized form of the Amazigh languages than those of the Tell, the culture of the modern Tuareg may give us some hope of recovering some of the earlier Amazigh cultural forms, less influenced by the intensive Arabization of the north. The Tuareg are not only peculiarly interesting in themselves, but they are also interesting for the light they shed on earlier Amazigh societies.

How far the use of the Libyan alphabet spread into the countryside is evident from the distribution of its inscriptions, many of which are found in the wilder areas along the Tunisian-Algerian border, but the vast majority of them come from rural rather than from urban contexts; weaving may well be such a context. In any case, weaving has always been an emblem of identity, whether urban or rural (Chafik 2005). In recent years, the term *Tifinagh* has been adopted in the media, in political discourse, as well as in associative and academic activities. In Morocco and Algeria, Tifinagh is the official alphabet for the teaching/learning of Amazigh. Is it a coincidence that this alphabet is part of artistic studies, including visual art, in today's Amazigh studies? Indeed, unlike in, for example, Arabic cultures, art is abundant in Amazigh cultures.

In presenting Tifinagh, its origin, and characteristics, this chapter has brought us closer to the potential relationship between this alphabet and the ancestral designs in Amazigh women's art of weaving. The question that comes to mind at this juncture is: Do these rug designs carry specific meanings that may help discuss the central thesis of this book? This question is addressed in the following chapter.

NOTES

1. It is important to note at this juncture that archeologists depend on the availability of funds and an appropriate overall sociopolitical context.

2. Levine's book *Dreamland of Humanists* (2013) highlights the Hamburg School, with a focus on its main proponents, Aby Warburg, Ernest Cassirer, and Erwin Panofsky, as a movement that deeply impacted the twentieth-century humanities, and its scholars as pioneers of art history and philosophy.

3. The authors admit that difficulties did hamper their study of Amazigh inscriptions. Some of these difficulties are seen as typical of the inscriptions themselves and others as linked to administrative constraints or lack of political will. For the authors, only cooperation between researchers in the Maghreb and sub-Saharan countries may contribute to a better understanding of the origin and genesis of the inscriptions.

4. See chapter 1 for more understanding of this dual interest.

5. Ammerman and Cavalli-Sforza (1984) also propose their "wave of advance" model in their study of language spread.

6. Archeologists use the Arabic word *tell* to refer to a "mound" or "small hill." In archeology, the word *tell* refers to an artificial topographical feature—accumulated stratified debris of consecutive settlements at the same site.

7. This quote shows that the Amazigh language is historically more ancient than any Indo-European language. The latter languages were derived from a language that was used during the fifth and fourth centuries BC in Southern Caucasus in Asia Minor. The Indo-European languages spread in Europe during the discovery of agriculture and branched out into dozens of languages, themselves branching out in other languages during the Middle Ages (Ouachi 2002).

8. The authors also state that agriculture was practiced in the Sahara Desert in ancient times because of the discovery of pollen in the sites of Minyat and Amekni in the Algerian desert. They add that some Stone Age tools accompanied by pollen have been dated back with accuracy for some plants in the Minyat Site (3,450 years BC). As for the site of Amekni, it allowed for the discovery of pottery, two pieces of a mill, and twelve pestles in addition to pollen. This is what pushed Camps to correct his stance and acknowledge the possibility of practicing agriculture in Amekni in the eighth century BC.

9. More on the relationship between women and Tifinagh is provided in the section below.

10. The kings, however, expressed themselves in Punic, as we know from Micipsa's tombstone (Brett and Fentress 1996).

11. I will not discuss here whether the writing reflects a language or a dialect. Amazigh is assumed to be one language, grammatically speaking (Sadiqi 1997).

Chapter 4

Amazigh Women's Rug[1] Designs and Their Meanings

This chapter focuses on Amazigh women's art of weaving, more precisely the designs women have been creating on the rugs since time immemorial. This creativity has been carried out from generation to generation within a double process that may be termed "skill transfer" and "knowledge transfer." Involving both skill and knowledge, Amazigh women's art pleases our senses, but it also intrigues our minds. Although their shapes have evolved throughout the centuries, the designs have retained some core graphic patterns that characterize the Tifinagh alphabet.

The best entry to a debunking of these two entangled aspects of women's weaving is a close consideration of the designs. This is what this fourth chapter sets out to address. The first part of the chapter highlights the designs as ancestral art and relates them to the beginnings of agriculture in the regions that were inhabited by the Amazigh people. The advent of agriculture has historically been associated with the social organization of Amazigh communities, along with the importance of rain and its relation to fertility, divinity, and religion. The second part uses a specific methodology to focus on the various semantic functions of the rug designs, namely as cultural markers, identity markers, and a historical archive, and underlines some related practices that have adopted the core patterns of the Amazigh women's art of weaving, namely, body tattooing, henna decoration, and cloth-making.

AMAZIGH WOMEN'S WEAVING: AN ART THAT CONTINUES TO LIVE

Chapter 2 presents Amazigh women as artistic weavers with a long history and female weaving as a pre-historical art. The present chapter digs deeper in

this statement through highlighting the nature of Amazigh women's weaving and the meanings of the designs they have been creating. To start with, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines *weaving* in the following terms:

> The production of fabric by interlacing two sets of yarns so that they cross each other, normally at right angles, usually accomplished with a hand- or power-operated loom. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

Such a production is well-attested to in the Amazigh culture, where the looms, shuttles, and frames are tools that go back to the Stone Age and are considered works of art in themselves (Naylor 2009; Sadiqi et al. 2009; Spring and Hudson 1995; Ki-Zerbo 1989). *Azţţa* or *Asţţa* (weaving) is generally viewed as one of the oldest forms of art that humans have created. In Amazigh studies, it is considered the oldest Amazigh art, and its origin is generally linked to the Amazigh people's inspiration by their surrounding nature, especially plant threads.

While it is not excluded that men wove, weaving is considered an inherently women's art for several related reasons: it is a "private," rather than a "public" activity; it is associated with family and community events like childbirth, marriage, circumcision, and so on; it is passed on from mother to daughter; and it is the source of other women's activities, such as body tattooing, henna decoration, and cloth-making, as will be detailed later in this chapter. These reasons are corroborated by the fact that weaving necessitates skill rather than physical force. It is perhaps for these reasons that women's association with the origin and evolution of weaving is widely acknowledged in the modern reconstructions of pre-historical North Africa and the Great Sahara.

Weaving in North Africa and the Great Sahara is, thus, pre-historic. It preceded, accompanied, and outlived the Greco-Roman period, and it is still alive today. This statement is documented in the findings of archeologists and historians of pre-history, especially those who worked on Ghirza, the southwestern town of Libya (De Moor et al. 2017). Other places that provided similar findings include Nefoussa, Sabratha, Germa, Ghadames, Leptis Magna, and Janzur, in addition to various Amazigh archeological sites and settlements like Yefren, Awjla, Nalut, and Zuwarah. De Moor et al. state:

> North African textiles and items of clothing were well-known and sought after in Antiquity. This is amply testified by the mention of several types of garments of Numedian and African origin in literary and epigraphic sources such as the Edict of Diocletian (ad 301) or the Expositio Totius Mundi et Gentium (ad 350–362). The Notitia Dignitatum (c. ad 400) mentions a gynaeceum in Carthage, and archeological finds of fulleries, dye-works and production sites for purple dye further emphasize that textile production was an important industry in the region. (De Moor et al. 2017)

The authors add:

> Recent projects in the Fezzan and other sites in Libya have resulted in the finding of small groups of textiles dated to the Garamantian Period. A number of textiles remains dated to the early centuries AD have been recovered from burials at Zinkekrā and Qasr Watwat in the area around Old Jarmo. Mainly shrouds or blankets, some of them are described as fine fabrics, weft-faced tabbies, in some cases with more than 56 weft threads/cm. Others are coarser. They are mostly wool, but some weft threads consist of very fine fibers that might be cotton. Weaves appear to be weft-faced tabby, and half-basket or perhaps basket weave. Decoration comprises brightly colored geometric patterns in tapestry weave and what looks like purple gammas or tablions. One piece is embroidered. (De Moor et al. 2017)

On the other hand, scholar of pre-history Claudine Cohen wrote what seems to be the first "feminist" reading of women's lives and deeds in prehistory. Her book *Femmes de la Préhistoire* (2016) highlights the place and roles of women in ancient times and deplores the "invisibility" of their contributions in archeological and historical scholarship on antiquity. The author asserts that women participated in shaping humanity from its beginnings, and interestingly, she states that pre-historic women did not only pick plants, but they also wove baskets and cords:

> Les femmes préhistoriques, loin d'être des bonnes à rien sédentaires dans un groupe à dominance mâle en devenir, furent celles qui inventèrent les gestes et les outils, les instruments du portage des enfants (tissage de paniers et de cordes), celles qui furent les initiatrices des comportements de partage des ressources au sein du groupe. (Cohen 2016: 127–28)

> Prehistoric women, far from being sedentary good-for-nothings in a male-dominated group in the making, were those who invented the gestures and tools, the instruments for carrying children (weaving baskets and ropes), those who were the initiators of resource sharing behaviors within the group. (translation provided by author)

Equally interesting is Cohen's association of African women's weaving skills with the most ancient Paleolithic ages:

> [L]es femmes Konso du Nord-Ouest de l'Ethiopie fabriquent et utilisent des outils de pierre sur éclat pour le travail de peaux. [. . .] La mention de fibres végétales, cordes, tissages, couture, est déjà ancienne en archéologie préhistorique. [. . .] Les activités de tissage, de filage, de vannerie, de sparterie, de fabrication de textiles et de paniers, ont fait l'objet d'enquêtes renouvelées. (Cohen 2016: 135–36)

For Cohen, the Konso women of North-West Ethiopia make and use flake stone tools for working with skins. The mention of plant fibers, ropes, weaving, and sewing is already ancient in pre-historic archeology, and weaving, spinning, basketry, esparto work, and textile and basket manufacturing were the subject of renewed investigations. It is indeed significant that although Cohen's focus is on Western women, her mention of African women echoes Ouachi's (2003) assertion that Amazigh populations were active in North Africa and the Great Sahara well before their civilization reached the West. It is interesting that both Ouachi (2003) and Cohen (2016) mention weaving as a woman's pre-historical activity; it means that weaving in North Africa and the Great Sahara started as a homegrown art that was inspired by nature, as will be detailed later in this chapter. The weaving artistic skill must have necessitated long-term practice and stamina, as ethnographic studies on this skill confirm. For example, weaving depended on individual women's technical ability to provide the right raw materials, such as wool from animals, not an easy task in ancient times. This was possible mainly because of the ancient nomadic pastoral environment and way of life. Indeed, Ouachi (2003) states that nomadic pastoralism in the classic period was attested along the desert fringes and into the Sahara and was supported by textual evidence, while archeological evidence supports oasis cultivation. Both types of evidence mean that the ancient Amazigh economy was a mixed one.

Based on the above sections, the Amazigh weavers did not historically use any pre-prepared weaving models, and Amazigh rugs did not originate in the oriental carpets of the Islamic world. Rather, Amazigh women invented the Amazigh knot, the most important piece in the act of weaving, as it orients the shape of the designs that ensue from it. The nature and texture of the knot is indeed the strongest characteristic of a specific weaving. As weaving was a privilege of some women only, performing the knot bestowed *baraka* (divine blessing) on the weaver, a *baraka* that has ever since been transferred to wool and the weaving instruments (Boeley 2000; Henri Basset 1922). Furthermore, the knot bestowed blessings on the weaver because it was thought to incorporate a woman's secret knowledge of how to make it. This blessing is transferred to the wool and the weaving instruments because these tools allow women's knowledge to be transferred from generation to generation.

WEAVING AS ART

Art is defined as follows:

> Art is something that is created with imagination and skill and that is beautiful or that expresses important ideas and feelings. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*)

Throughout the history of the Amazigh culture, women are recognized as the artists in their communities. Amazigh culture is made up of feminine symbols that are reminiscent of domestic/private activities, hence the historical association of Amazigh culture and language with intimate contexts, namely home and hearth, also recognized to be women's spaces. From another perspective, various authors have asserted that Amazigh has never been the language of central power even during the Amazigh dynasties. For these and similar reasons, I have presented Amazigh as a "female" language (Sadiqi 2003).

The Amazigh art of weaving is a collective ritualistic art that abounds with drawings that gradually became feminine symbols. These symbols have, throughout the centuries, been extended to pottery, jewelry, and body tattooing, as will be shown later in this chapter. Additionally, these drawings have been attested on the walls of caves and in tombstone epitaphs. It is also reported that Tuareg women drew these symbols on sand, taught them to their children, used them to send secret messages, and passed them on to their daughters. The drawings and symbols have been reported in the literature as vehicles for women's sexuality and "ephemeral" messages that can be easily erased on sand or "hidden" in places like caves, a female way of "protecting" women's expressions and making them "sacred." Indeed, art and the sacred go together. Cohen attributes both to pre-historic women:

> [Les femmes] prennent une large part à la production artistique, et se réunissent pour produire ensemble des œuvres peintes dont les motifs géométriques reprennent ceux de la vannerie, des tableaux, ou des panneaux peints évoquant les thèmes de la cueillette. D'autres expressions artistiques—dessins éphémères sur le sable accompagnés de chants et de récits—sont pratiquées exclusivement par les femmes, et certains lieux ornés (abris sous-roche ou grottes) sont réservés à l'initiation des adolescents. Si l'on admet que l'art paléolithique a pu avoir une fonction rituelle ou religieuse, certaines images ou certains objets étaient peut-être destinés aux femmes ou aux jeunes filles, plutôt qu'à un usage masculin. (Cohen 2016: 149)

According to Cohen, women largely contributed to artistic production as they produced painted works whose geometric patterns are reminiscent of basketry and whose painted panels evoke themes of picking. Other artistic expressions, such as ephemeral drawings on the sand, accompanied by songs and stories, were practiced exclusively by women, and some decorated places, such as rock shelters or caves, were reserved for the initiation of adolescents. If we accept that Paleolithic art may have had a ritual or religious function, certain images or objects were intended for women or young girls, rather than for men.

SEXUALITY AS REPRODUCTION

With respect to sexual reproduction among humans, historians tell us that it was thought to parallel the working of soils to make them fertile, as well as the natural lunar cycles and the seasonal cycles of harvest. In other words, the fertility of the soil, the regular lunar changes, and the annual harvest were associated with the fecundity of women. Cohen states in this respect:

> [L]es labours et les semailles qui rendaient les sols fertiles, devaient être pour ces peules d'agriculteurs, semblables à l'acte sexuel qui féconde la femme. Les cycles de la nature (phases lunaires, saisons, récoltes) répondent aux cycles de la vie et de la reproduction. A cette constellation d'images et de symboles se seraient associés, très tôt dans la Préhistoire un culte voué aux femmes génitrices, et une vénération des mères fondatrices des lignées. (Cohen 2016:170)

In this quote, Cohen considers that plowing and sowing, meant to render the soil fertile, were seen by farming people as symbolic of the sexual act, which impregnates women to make them fertile. The repetitive cycles of nature, such as the lunar phases, seasons, and harvests, were associated with the cycles of life and reproduction. This constellation of images and symbols were associated in early in pre-history with a cult dedicated to female progenitors, and a veneration of the founding mothers of the lineages. Indeed, in ancient communities, just as the harvest was positively associated with the fertility of the soil, human reproduction was positively associated with the fertility of women. In both cases, fertility was so central that it was associated with divinity and the production of goddesses. In turn, these are reflected in symbols on rugs, as the sections below show. This also enhanced the expression of women's sexuality and life cycles in Amazigh women's artistic expressions, such as the recurrent representation of the moon in the rug designs. Additionally, pregnancy and delivery, as well as women's concerns and everyday chores, are sometimes expressed in weaving rituals, as will be shown later in this chapter. Cohen states:

> [L]es rythmes physiologiques féminins correspondent dans leur durée aux cycles de la lune. A reconnaître la régularité des rythmes de leurs propres corps, les femmes acquièrent une conscience à la fois de la répétition cyclique et de l'écoulement linéaire du temps—temps vécu, mais aussi temps cosmique. Cette périodicité des cycles féminins put contribuer, dans les sociétés préhistoriques, à la mesure du temps individuel et collectif. (Cohen 2016: 166)

In this quote, Cohen states that feminine physiological rhythms correspond in their duration to the cycles of the moon. By recognizing the regularity of the rhythms of their own bodies, women acquired an awareness of both the

cyclical repetition and the linear flow of time—lived time, but also cosmic time. This periodicity of female cycles may have contributed, in pre-historic societies, to the measurement of individual and collective time.

In addition to reproduction and fertility, women have always been significantly impacted by the natural environment in which they evolved, especially as it relates to the practical knowledge of plants that enhance fecundity, pregnancy, and delivery.[2] Plants are, in turn, the result of fertile lands and agriculture. This fact brings us closer to this topic.

WEAVING AND AGRICULTURE

Cohen states:

> D'autres savoirs pratiques sont liés à la fécondité [. . .] l'usage de telles plantes, de telles préparations, tels philtres ou tels onguents, pouvant favoriser la procréation, ou, au contraire l'empêcher. La connaissance des plantes médicinales fit peut-être de certaines femmes des guérisseuses, voire des chamanes. (Cohen 2016: 167)

As Cohen explains in this quote, other practical knowledge is linked to fertility. Thus, the use of such and such plants, such and such preparations, such and such philters, or such and such ointments could promote or prevent procreation. According to this author, knowledge of medicinal plants made some women healers or even shamans.

Historians date back the invention of agriculture to the Neolithic Age and associate its evolution throughout the centuries to changes in the modes of human subsistence (Ouachi 2003; Cohen 2016). Based on this, one would easily imagine that when plants and animals started to be domesticated, women started to weave. Indeed, being based on threads and fiber, weaving is a task that depended on agriculture and pastoral nomadism. For example, referring to the Libyan area called Fezzan, de Moor et al. state:

> In Antiquity, the Fezzan was populated by the Garamantes. Mentioned by Herodotus, Plinyn, Ptolemy, and Tacitus, the Garamantes appear to have controlled most of central Sahara. Excavations have shown that they did much more than that. They practiced advanced irrigated agriculture in the oases that inter alia included cotton cultivation, and they established urban centers as hubs for Trans-Saharan trade. One of them was Garama, now known as Old Jarmo. Their heyday was between 300 BC and 500 A.D. (De Moor et al. 2017)

Cohen corroborates this with an emphasis on plants:

> Si [les femmes] se sont livrées aux activités de cueillette ou de collecte, les femmes dans les sociétés de chasseurs-cueilleurs étaient en mesure d'observer

> les plantes, leur germination, de faire l'expérience des semailles, et de reconnaître les sols les mieux adaptés à cette opération. De la reconnaissance des plantes à l'observation de la germination des graines au prélèvement des semences, le passage est plausible. (Cohen, 2016: 168)

Here the author states that women engaged in picking activities and plant collecting in ancient societies. In hunter-gatherer societies, women were able to observe plants, follow their germination, experience sowing, and recognize soils best suited for this operation. From recognizing plants to observing seed germination to collecting seeds, the transition was easy to figure out.

On the other hand, the drying-out of some areas encouraged the domestication of sheep and cattle as an essential source of food. This domestication helps explain the natural contingency of women to elements like thread that we now take for granted when considering weaving. For example, the southwestern city of Ghirza in Libya is reported to be an Amazigh farming community well before it was occupied by the Romans, and its remnants are reported to count some eighteen or more farmhouses "with wells and cisterns to catch rainwater, in addition to olive-presses, cemeteries and temples" (de Moor et al. 2017). In sum, given women's pre-historic interest in plants and weaving, and given a certain natural division of work between the two sexes, one can say that women contributed more than men to progress in the history of the Amazigh economy.

The relationship between weaving and agriculture is, in turn, at the basis of the relationship between weaving and social organization.

WEAVING AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The main two factors in the relationship between weaving and social organization are habitat and social reproduction.

Habitat

With respect to habitat, the organization of tent-dwelling needed an organization of space into "private" spaces, where women could weave. Camps-Fabrer (1966) states that furniture art flourished in Neolithic Sahara Antiquity. In Camps-Fabrer and Tillet (1986), there is mention of two ram heads from the North African region of Afalou.[3] She also mentions pottery-making in the Neolithic sites of eastern Algeria, as well as traces of epi-Paleolithic Caspian traditions such as Mekta-type skeletons, animal herded cultivation, and composite population (Brett and Fentress 1996).

In addition, the pyramid-like shape of the tent reflects the importance of tribalism at the symbolic level. The tent mirrors the symbol of the tribe in which the oldest male ancestor constitutes the head and various layers of kinship are formed in hierarchical way through blood-relationships. Indeed, the family in the Tuareg society, the only remnant of ancient Amazigh social organization, is defined and symbolized by the tent, which is not only a woman's space, but also a woman's property. Brett and Fentress state:

> Besides her jewelry, the most important objects owned by a Berber woman are her marriage bed and her tent, which is constructed from a portion of her mother's tent cut out at the time of her marriage and reconstructed by the artisans or slaves. The new husband joins his wife in her tent, and this will be their home as long as their marriage lasts. (Brett and Fentress 1996: 207)

The interior of the tent is divided into two halves by gender, the men's to the east and the women's to the west. Although the men's objects, such as saddles and arms, are stored in their half, the men themselves normally spend all their time outside the tent, sleeping outside it from puberty onward. In the women's half are kept the stores, musical instruments, and the marriage bed, which serves during the day as a sofa for the wife and her children. Although boys and girls are raised together, the boys' exit from the tent at puberty means that the girls spend more time with their mothers, and thus they learn much more of the abundant folklore, including fairy tales, but also long epics with some historical content. These facts show that the transmission and conservation of Tuareg culture has been in the hands of the women.

Within the nuclear family structure, gender-based space allocation is clear: the husband occupies his wife's tent and leaves it in the case of divorce. However, the smallest residential unit in the Tuareg society is the group that camps together, and this is effectively patrilocal—a father and his sons, with their families. At the head of the camp is the *amghar*, typically the eldest male in the patriline. This is an instance of the Amazigh tendency toward gerontocracy.

This structure is, of course, diametrically opposed to the first. The resolution of this apparent conflict is highly symbolic: after a year of marriage, during which the husband lives with his wife's camping group, his own family arrives in a surprise "raid" on the camp. After a feast, they remove the tent and the young couple and carry them off to their own camp. Order is restored, and the female household is removed to its new patrilineal enclave.

Today, and because of marginalization, the Tuareg women have little in common with other North Africans. They are not veiled or sheltered, they may invite guests into their tents, and they have surprising freedom of behavior. In the sixteenth century, the Tuareg women's relative freedom

reflects relaxed gender relations and a more open social organization. According to the sixteenth-century Andalusian diplomat and author Leo Africanus, a woman's good name is based as much on her wits as on her beauty and the status of her family. Here is a glimpse of his description of Amazigh women:

> Very amiable in conversation, and freely give you, their hands. They are sometimes so kind as to allow themselves to be kissed. But it would be dangerous to go beyond this, for the men will kill [. . .] for this sort of offence. (Africanus, 1550: 37)

The author concludes that women in Amazigh Tuareg cultures are relatively free. As for their artistic qualities, he does not exclude a significant freedom of action before marriage. From puberty onward, both men and women attend the *ahal* outside of the camp, in a place chosen for its charm. Accompanied by the music of the local one-stringed violin, which is played by the women, the men improvise poetry, using it to exchange insults, boasts, gallantry, and the occasional epic tale. This is one of the defining moments in Tuareg society, in which reputations are established and assignations agreed upon. It is marked, as well, by a simple friendliness between the sexes, a friendliness that is inconceivable in the north. It is not surprising that a woman is always consulted on the choice of a potential husband, and though the rigid endogamy of society leaves her with a very limited choice, the final decision rests with her.

Religion

Religion, in whatever shape, way, or form, has always dealt with the supernatural (spirits and unseen forces) that transcend human comprehension and power. As such, it has always been part and parcel of human social organization. The evolution of religion and its diverse manifestations mirror the evolution and diverse manifestations of human social structures. Amazigh social organization is no exception.

As agriculture and social organization evolved in North Africa and the Great Sahara, the means of human subsistence witnessed transitions and paradigm shifts that, among other things, caused the emergence of goddesses and other feminine symbols of divinity, as chapter 2 illustrates. The emergence of female divinity took various forms and brought about a new world order that was later noticed in the Western world, as Cohen states:

> Le culte de la "Grande Déesse" serait ainsi la pierre angulaire d'un nouvel ordre de choses et du monde. Ce moment de transition éclaire, comme de

> manière prophétique, les images et les structures sociales que livrent les sites archéologiques plus tardifs. Il préluderait à une religion nouvelle, qui traduit la multiplication de ces formes féminines associée à celle du taureau dans les cultures néolithiques antérieures. (Cohen 2016: 173–34)

In this quote, Cohen considers the cult of the "Great Goddess" the cornerstone of a new world order of things. This moment of transition illuminates, as if in a prophetic way, the images and the world and social structures that have been preserved by archaeological sites. The author considers this to be a prelude to a new religion, which preserved diverse feminine forms that go back to the Neolithic cultures.

In Amazigh communities, religion has always been important. In ancient times, it was a private and public concern, as the inscriptions that accompanied the cult of the dead show. The cult of Baal Hammon, the male god adopted from Egypt, and the cult of Tanit, the local female goddess initially worshiped in Carthage (today's Tunisia), were widespread among the Amazigh populations. Like any divinity, these two deities were associated with the Amazigh's ancestors and impacted every aspect of their lives. Brett and Fentress state:

> The Augilae [Amazigh tribe] consider the spirits of their ancestors' gods, they swear by these and consult them as oracles, and, having made their requests, treat the dreams of those who sleep in their tombs as responses. (Brett and Fentress 1996: 35)

In the Amazigh cosmology, gods and goddesses were associated with the dead, hence the widespread cult of the dead among the Amazigh. These deities held a special power that accompanied the dead to their graves and endowed the soil they were buried in with fertility. The cult of the dead is one of the most distinguishing features of the Amazigh people from pre-history onward (Camps 1986). Thus, visiting tombs was understood as seeking this fertility, and a dead person was believed to acquire the power of controlling the future. In Cyrenaica (today's Libya), the shrines were elaborate and decorated with enlarged sexual organs in reference to spirits ensuring human fertility. The intersection of deity and architecture is important here. In modern times, this intersection is more associated with women than with men. For example, more young women than men visit tombs with the wish of becoming fertile.

These deep characteristics of the Amazigh's religion and social structure in general were not affected by the Roman invasion. The family and the clan, as well as the belief systems of the Amazigh populations, remained the same for the long centuries that followed pre-history (Gsell 1927). The question to

ask at this juncture is: How do the facts cited in the above sections and the previous chapters relate to the weavers' rug designs?

AMAZIGH WOMEN AND RUG DESIGNS

This section focuses on Amazigh women's rug designs and overviews the main meaning-makings these designs have been generating in modern times. This is an entry point to my hypothesis that these designs are linked to the Amazigh alphabet, Tifinagh. The hitherto absence of such a hypothesis is mainly due to the structural invisibility of women's agency in Amazigh studies.

Up to now, Amazigh women's weaving designs have been studied as women's artistic expressions and have been linked to women's sexuality, spirituality, and symbolism. Some of the rug designs, imagined and created over the centuries, were replicated in body adornments, such as henna and tattoos, and in cloth-making (textile), as mentioned in the preceding sections. The designs have fascinated and inspired scholars and ordinary people, but it is only in the postcolonial era that serious readings of these designs started to manifest. The designs have been read as cultural markers, as identity markers, and as feminine art. Illuminating as they are, these readings tend to build on the idea that the designs are creative feminine legacies that need to be preserved (Doutté 1909; René Basset 1910; and Ouachi 1985).

Rug Designs as Reflections of Amazigh Women's Spirituality, Sexuality, and Fertility

Among the designs that are associated with women's spirituality and beliefs, the sun, the stars, the moon, and the sky loom large. These designs may be related to the nature of the ancient Amazigh religion (Ben Miled 1998). According to the French orientalist and linguist René Basset (1910), ancient Amazigh populations considered the sky, the mountains, and the rivers typical loci of divinity. The sky included the sun, the moon, and the stars; the mountains included the rocks and the caves; and the rivers included surfaces with water, such as the sea and ocean. They saw the Atlas Mountains as "touching the sky" and overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, which derives its name from the word *Atlas*.

By reproducing these sites of divinity in the rugs they wove, Amazigh women were expressing their own beliefs and creating their own cosmology, which trickled down to their families and communities. In the absence of documentation on Amazigh religions, the designs may well be the only sources that help scholars understand them as human expressions of religion

and spirituality. Of particular interest here is the recurrence of the triangles, horizontal lines, and circles that have been grouped to visualize Tanit with the circle in the upper position (the head), the triangle under it (body), and a horizontal line between the two (arms). Tanit was an Amazigh goddess of water (rain, fertility) in ancient North Africa (Ben Miled 1998; Ouachi 2003). She was the main deity of Carthage (today's Tunisia), from which her cult spread to the Mediterranean region. Tanit was also the lunar goddess and the symbol of war. This goddess has been given different forms, including the traditional Amazigh cooking utensil *tajin*, but the recurrence of the circle, horizontal line, and triangle is striking.

The textual presence of the goddess Tanit in rug designs demonstrates the importance of sexuality, procreation, and fertility in ancient Amazigh women's cosmology. The meanings of these designs have been immortalized in one of the most significant rituals in Amazigh communities in Morocco and across the region: the ritual of *Taghunja* (or *tasliyt n unzar*—the rainbow). A physical reflection of Tanit, *Taghunja* (a big wooden doll with a circle head, a vertical body, and horizontal arms) is held by a procession of children, as they implore rain to come back through chanting. Like the rug designs, the ritual of *Taghunja*, which is still alive to this day, is a powerful archival memory and a source of information on Amazigh women's cosmology prior to the advent of monotheistic religions.[4]

In addition to the *Taghunja* ritual, rug designs are celebrated in oral literature. The following lines are chanted by women during the process of weaving (*astta* or *aztta* in the Amazigh language):

Bless you *astta*
So that you be peaceful.
A well-woven rug is like a Pacha.

The weaver singers associate the act of weaving with happy moments around traditional tea ceremonies:

In front of his tea tray
With a rug in front of fantasias
Here there is happiness.

This association extends to bestowing the sacredness of the "talent" of weaving:

Oh bee, God gave you the talent of weaving.
You produce a weaving that no fingers made.
(extracts from the English translation of the song by the author)

In addition to serving as a doorway to Amazigh women's spirituality, sexuality, and fertility, the rug designs also serve as a doorway to understanding these women's natural environments, as attested to in the frequency of beetles, snakes, and scorpions, as well as rivers and flowers. Beetles, snakes, and scorpions denote a rural and hot environment that is matched by a more temperate environment in which rivers are full and flowers blooming. The aesthetics that the designs capture and the contrast between the hot and cooler environments is indicative of the changing cycle of seasons, itself linked to the harvest cycle, which is central to Amazigh life and cosmology, as mentioned above.

As for the designs showing *tajins* (Amazigh cooking pots), teapots, and spoons, they may serve as an entry to women's everyday chores. It is important to add here that in addition to their use for everyday subsistence, these utensils also symbolize Amazigh hospitality and community pride, as the above song about rug-weaving expresses. The *tajin* in particular links women's daily chores with their divinity, a link that is also attested to in Margaret Raush's analysis of Amazigh women's poetry (Rausch 2004). This link is characteristic of Amazigh women's feel for symbolism as a reflection of their experience with spirituality.

In sum, the geometric patterns, forms, and figures that women created, wove, sacralized, and immortalized on rugs constitute an important doorway to their cosmological and everyday worlds, where spirituality mingles with quotidian experiences. The power of these patterns resides in their sense-making and symbolism that enabled the designs to survive and continue to attract attention. The deeply ingrained symbolism that the designs encoded have become part and parcel of the Amazigh "Unconscious" in the sense of Jung's "collective unconscious." This partly explains the sacredness, awe, rituals, and chanting that accompany the various stages of rug-weaving that Amazigh communities have cherished to this day.

Indeed, weaving in Amazigh tribes has always been surrounded with mystique, and weavers were/are thought to hold *baraka* (divine blessing), and as such, they command respect and authority within their families' larger communities (Chafik 2005). This *baraka* is transposed to the wool they use. *Astta*, the act of weaving, is itself a highly ritualized performance. For example, wool is carefully selected, washed in the river, combed, spun, and dyed before rugs are woven on upright vertical looms that are often used as sacred objects in significant events, such as the ceremony to protect young girls' virginity. This ceremony varies from region to region; in the High Atlas Mountains, for example, the maiden steps over the loom in a forward and backward movement seven times while older women repeat, "Bismillah, bismillah, bismillah" ("in the name of God"), hence invoking the sacred power of the loom to protect the young girls' virginity. This ceremony foregrounds the sacrality of the loom in maintaining the cohesion of the family and the

community by ensuring the virginity of the girls as a guarantee of patrilineage. In Algeria, this ceremony is part of the larger wedding ceremony. Bourdieu and Passeron (1970) describe it in the following terms:

> In front of the wall of the weaving-loom, opposite the door, in the light, there, the young bride on her wedding-day. [. . .] The umbilical cord of the girl is buried behind the weaving loom and [. . .] in order to protect the virginity of maiden, she is made to pass through the warp. (Bourdieu and Passeron 1970: 219)

READINGS OF AMAZIGH WOMEN'S RUG-WEAVING

Before going into the readings per se of Amazigh women's rug-weaving, and in the interest of contextualizing these readings, a brief pulling together and synthesizing of the main functions of women's rug-weaving are in order. These functions include historicity, economic utility, and symbolic power.

Historicity

A fundamental characteristic of women's rug-weaving is its remarkable historicity. Indeed, the origin of rug- or carpet-weaving in Amazigh communities dates back to the Paleolithic Era or beyond, at a time when the first inhabitants of North Africa and the Great Sahara, the ancient Amazigh populations, used to hand-spin cloth (Chafik 2005; Brett and Fentress 1996). Significantly, every tribe had a style of rug that distinguished it from other tribes. Rug-weaving is the oldest recorded art in North Africa and the Great Sahara, and this practice is intrinsically associated with Amazigh women (Mernissi 2006; Becker 2006; Sadiqi 2014). Today, rug-weaving is perceived as a rural female art. Most artists were/are non-literate in the sense that they were/are not taught how to read and write. The presence of the goddess symbols, such as the triangle, is the product of ancestral transmission, which the artists may or may not have modified without destroying the core inherited patterns. As such, the art of making rugs continues to be a product of women's creativity and imagination, away from any pre-prepared models (Chtatou 2020). Historically, rug-weaving in North Africa has served two main functions: economic and symbolic.

Economic Function

The economic function is mainly attested in the fact that throughout history, women have imagined designs and woven them on rugs, men sold the rugs, and the money earned was used to buy food and other necessities for

the household. This practice continues in the present time in the villages of the Atlas Mountains, and women's rugs continue to be sold in local markets (*souqs*) as the main source of income for many rural families (Belghiti 1971). The volume and nature of the commercial transactions has historically been affected by the specific environments in which they were made: the rugs were smaller and transportable if the tribes were nomadic or semi-nomadic, and bigger if the tribes were sedentary. In other words, the type and size of the rugs had to match the lifestyle of specific tribes. The thick and multilayered rugs that abound in the cold Atlas Mountains contrast with the light and flat rugs of the hot Saharan areas. Today, tribes are more sedentary, and so the rugs are medium to large in size.

The assorted styles and textures of the rugs are, thus, key to information about ancient modes of living and how humans interacted with their changing environments. Additionally, by helping communities to survive, rug-weaving is a source of information on the status of women as artists and providers in in Amazigh communities. Hand-woven rugs are also key to the study of the history and evolution of tribal lifestyles. For example, they may reveal a great deal about the agricultural way of life of the tribes where the raising of sheep (as a source of the wool used for rug-weaving) is essential. They may also be instrumental in revealing the direction of the movement of nomadic tribes, the continuity or discontinuity of such movements, as well as the changing size and economic state of the tribes.

The rugs can also inform us about the origin and development of craftsmanship in Amazigh communities because rugs were useful not only for the household and the community, but also for developing other activities, such as the preparation of the tools women use to weave. These tools are generally two meters in length, made of wood, and have both vertical and horizontal shapes that facilitate their use on the floor with women sitting behind them. Studying the history of these tools and their evolution may shed light on how humans evolved in North Africa and the Great Sahara in their quest for subsistence and survival throughout history. These studies not only help us to understand the division of labor according to sex and family structure in ancient times, but they may also be used to understand the present times.

Symbolic Power

The symbolic power of the rugs is revealed by a textual analysis of the designs they have carried for centuries. In practice, Amazigh rugs are characterized by what is referred to as the "Amazigh knot," a central technique that involves the creation of a knot and its use to tie the new warp onto the existing one.[5] Knots are performed manually by the weaver and involve a specific skill. The rug designs vary in shape and form, but they contain recurrent patterns,

the most salient of which are: inverted and non-inverted triangles, horizontal lines, circles, snakes, beetles, scorpions, rivers, flowers, stars, moons, hands, eyes, *tajins*, teapots, and spoons. The rugs are also characterized by bright colors—red, yellow, blue, and green. Symbolically, the red color represents strength and protection, blue wisdom, yellow eternity, and green peace.

These rug designs have attracted the curiosity of various scholars and travelers throughout history, but it is only in the postcolonial era that serious readings of the designs have started to manifest, as part of the reconstruction of the history of North Africa through social history. These readings may be categorized into four main types: those that consider the designs as cultural markers, those that consider them as identity markers, those that consider them as feminine art, and those that consider them as a historical archive. In modern times, the first group of people to be attracted by the designs of the Amazigh rugs were the French colonizers. During the colonization of, for example, Morocco (1912–1956), the French endeavored to co-opt and demystify Amazigh women's weaving designs by appropriating their art. Hence, in the 1930s, many French designers such as Le Corbusier, Charles and Ray Eames, and Hugo Alvar Alto included soft Amazigh rugs in their houses as a complement to their austere-looking furniture. Others, like Frank Lloyd Wright, brought rugs from Morocco for their clients (Howe et al. 1939). Practices like these popularized Amazigh rugs in the West. For these colonizers, the rugs were a marker of a distinct Amazigh culture, a distinction that confirmed the divide-and-rule strategy the colonizers used to separate the Amazigh populations from Arab ones. In parallel, many European scholars, such as Westmarck (1904, 1926), or more recently, Saulniers (2000), were interested in simply studying the rugs (Howe et al. 1939; Berque 1964 and 1978).

After independence, Moroccan scholars used social history to reclaim the voices that had been marginalized in the official national history. Novelists such as Driss Chraibi and sociologists such as Abdelkébir Khatibi wrote in French but used Amazigh women's local productions as a cultural subtext to their fiction and scholarship. In parallel to this, some promoters of the Amazigh language and culture, such as Mohamed Chafik (2005), saw in the Amazigh rugs a strong emblem of a reclaimed Amazigh language and culture. As was stated above, this author argues that Amazigh tribes have historically distinguished themselves from each other by the type of rugs and weaving styles they created. According to Chafik (2005), each tribe is traditionally reputed to have its own rug-weaving style, often used to decorate the interior spaces of tents and homes or to display on the back of horses during the tribe's ceremonies, such as weddings and local festivals. The rug designs have also been read as "cultural markers" or "identity markers."

CULTURAL MARKERS

As cultural markers, Amazigh rugs are also read as tokens of resistance against French colonization (Chafik 2005). By displaying their carpets on the doors of their homes or on their horsebacks during their fight against the colonizers, Amazigh tribes were brandishing their pride and faith in their ancestral chivalry. In a sense, rugs were flags in those times of crisis. Additionally, while the French colonizers appropriated women's rugs by making them part of commercial transactions between Morocco and France, and by so doing brushing aside their value as art and Amazigh women as artists, Moroccans used the cultural aspect of the rugs to reconstruct and decolonize the country's modern history (Sadiqi 2014).

Beyond their ornamental and aesthetic dimension, women's rug designs have also been read as a type of writing, that is, a mode of visual expression geared toward educating readers about the past and the present. For example, Khatibi (2002) uses data from the philosophy of language to argue that tattooing (which is related to weaving, as shown below) is a form of writing that uses a visual and spatial semiotic system. This view is supported by the fact that tattoos in the Amazigh culture appear on the visible or exposed parts of the body, such as the face, hands, arms, and neck, which presupposes that they have meanings to be deciphered and interpreted. For Khatibi, the tattooed body is a written body, a language that tells and retells history. This is a crucial point insofar as writing is linked to speaking. Indeed, semioticists like Julia Kristeva (1969) consider writing to include voice and body language. Additionally, Moroccan sociologist Rahma Bourquia (1996) sees in the traces of tattooing the speech of women. These two views are important for the argument I make in this book, because tattooing replicates and recuperates, as well as restores and renews, the older rug-weaving designs with their reconstructed or evolving meaning. It replicates it in the forms of the designs, recuperates it by extending it by relating it to the female body, restores it by safeguarding its foundational patterns, and renews it by accompanying its evolution.

IDENTITY MARKERS

With the rise of the Amazigh movement from the mid-1980s onward, the rug designs have been used as emblems of identity reclamation. In addition to gracing/decorating/adorning the covers of books that address Amazigh identity, history, and culture, they appear in Amazigh NGO (non-governmental organizations) brochures and in various newspapers and other (social) media outlets, such as websites that promote Amazigh culture and language. The symbolism and aesthetics of the designs inspired and continue to inspire

Amazigh scholars, activists, and politicians. For example, activists adopted the colors of the rug designs for the new Amazigh flag. The design/letter in the Amazigh flag represents the pharyngealized sound /z/ that characterizes the Amazigh language.

In parallel, some scholars are using the history of Amazigh women's rug-weaving as proof of the long history of the Amazigh people (Chtatou 2020; Ennaji 2014). Likewise, it is remarkable that the rug designs are reappearing in today's youth culture as tokens of Amazigh identity, ranging over Maghrebi and the larger (North) African identity as opposed to a Middle Eastern one (Sadiqi 2014). This fact has been attested during and after the 2010–2011 popular uprisings in North Africa. The recognition of Amazigh as an official language in the post-uprising's constitution gave more symbolic power to the designs as identity markers.

ART

By the beginning of the twenty-first century and with the consolidation of the women's rights movement in Morocco, the rug designs started to be read from a feminist point of view as typical women's artistic expression. The first feminist scholar to provide such a reading is Fatima Mernissi, who researched rug weavers in the Moroccan High Atlas Mountains (Mernissi 2006; Sadiqi forthcoming). According to Mernissi (ibid.), rug-weaving is an art form that deserves to be protected in museums because its continuity may be seriously threatened by the increasing migration of young people to nearby towns and cities or to Europe. Mernissi (2006) states:

> Tribal rugs, antique and contemporary, with their vibrant colors and bold designs have always fascinated me, just like the art of Matisse and Klee and others under the spell of indigenous art. Many art lovers and collectors all over the world feel passionately attracted to these artistic creations from the most remote desert and mountain areas of North Africa. Numerous books have been published but nobody has focused on the women artists who have been creating these carpet paintings for a very long time. (Mernissi 2006: 1)

Mernissi's reading of Amazigh rug-weaving highlights the historical and social values of this art. Historically, it constitutes the only remaining link between the two shores of the Mediterranean after the Second World War destroyed most of the rural aspects of Europe. Socially, this art escaped both the colonizers' and the Moroccan state's control and managed to survive in some rural areas.

The three readings of the Amazigh rug designs make of them a genuine historical archive, a reading that I adopt in Sadiqi (2024).

RUG DESIGNS AS A HISTORICAL ARCHIVE

The designs Amazigh women have imagined and created are metaphors with specific significance in Amazigh communities and may hence be used as a genuine historical archive. Metaphors are not just an expression; they scan and give life to our imagination (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). As a historical archive, their discursive status changes from "subordinate discourse" (Messick 1987) to "different canon" (Pollock 1999). In the context of this book, the designs are genuine doorways to three avenues of research: women's spirituality, their evolving environments, and their constant endeavor to protect themselves, their families, and their communities from evil and supernatural forces. These avenues of research yielded other uses of the designs, such as body adornment.

Body adornment is one of the oldest human arts (Granger-Taylore 1982; Schneider 1987). In Amazigh communities, body adornment is a woman's ancestral art whose forms, designs, and rituals are easily traceable to those of rug-weaving. Of these symbols, the triangles, circles, and horizontal lines abound. There are three main types of body-adornment: traditional tattooing, henna application, and traditional clothing. Whereas the first type is almost extinct today, the latter two are still vibrant not only in isolated Amazigh communities but throughout present-day North Africa and beyond.

It is significant to note that when reading rug designs as a historical archive, the utilitarian and the sacred intermingle semantically and materially. Semantically, the combination of the utilitarian and the sacred is part of how women see the world (whether physical or abstract), and materially, in real life, this double perception is part of women's daily experiences. The extraordinary combination of the utilitarian and the symbolic trickled down from women to their families and their communities. It is no coincidence that Amazigh communities have always thrived on the need for both economic benefits and symbolism. This, in turn, highlights women's role in not only producing artistic knowledge for their communities, but also in consolidating their communities' survival and continuity. The designs are so central in the symbolic system of Amazigh communities that they have been replicated in body adornment and clothing over centuries, as will be shown later in this chapter.

Tattooing

Historically, tattooing (the injection of ink into the human body) has been recognized as a human practice since the Neolithic Age (Deter-Wolf 2013; Deter-Wolf et al. 2016). In Amazigh communities, face and body tattooing is called *lusham* or *siyala* and is a traditional practice that leaves permanent marks on the skin. Tattoos are performed on various parts of the body, mainly the cheeks, the chin, the neck, and the bosom. Such tattoos have meanings

that depend on the part being tattooed. Thus, the tattoos on the chin symbolize fertility and those on the neck and bosom symbolize protection from the evil eye. The color of the tattoos is light to deep green, which is the natural result of the herbal plant ingredients used in the tattoo performance.

Tattoos were traditionally performed by older women on the bodies of younger women during important life rituals or events, such as birth and marriage. More specifically, it was the case that would-be mothers-in-law performed tattoos on the face and body of young virgins to "mark" them as future daughters-in-law. This specific act is called *rshim* in Amazigh. The results of such a performance were displayed during the wedding ceremony to highlight the purity of the bride. This display was part of the rituals that accompanied the wedding ceremony and marked the entry of girls into the community. To accompany these important rites of passage, traditional tattooing combined aesthetics (the beautification of women's faces and bodies), protection from the evil eye and spirits, and socialization.

Traditional tattooing marked other cycles of a woman's life, such as the onset of pregnancy, childbirth, and baptism that symbolize the value of the community for the individual. Tattooing was also used as a healing practice and as a shield from infertility. The aesthetic, therapeutic, and social functions of traditional tattooing in Amazigh communities have been recorded in images and linked to the local practices that preceded the coming of Islam to North Africa (Brousse 2012).

Today traditional tattoos have fallen in esteem and are being discredited as tokens of ancient paganism, which are prohibited in Islam. Indeed, the coming of Islam, a monotheistic religion, was instrumentalized by male interpreters of the sacred texts to prohibit any display of the human body. They saw tattoos as a threat to faith and tattooed body parts as destined for hell, where only fire could cleanse them. However, although steadily disappearing, traditional tattooing is still considered part of women's knowledge in Amazigh communities, mainly because of its attractive symbolic dimension.

Whatever the fate of traditional tattooing, it is interesting to note that the shapes and forms of *lusham* resemble those of woven rugs. This claim is corroborated by the fact that *lusham* designs, like rug designs, are generally accompanied by the ritual of chanting and, like rug designs, are considered sacred in the community. Additionally, beyond the household, the shapes of tattoo designs, like those of rugs, are a means of distinguishing one tribe from another. They are also a means of retrieving one's family lineage or the history of their land, thus highlighting the position of women in the cohesion and survival of Amazigh communities.

Like rug designs, tattoos express Amazigh women's spirituality. The image of the goddess Tanit materializes in both types of art through a combination of vertical and horizontal lines, circles, and dots, continuing, thus,

the symbolism of women's sexuality and fertility. Finally, like rug designs, tattoos are valuable keys that help decode women's symbolic knowledge in the absence of written documentation. As such, tattoos can help retrace the identity and history not only of women, but also of Amazigh communities, their art, and their imperiled cosmology.

Henna

Henna is the act of dying or coloring the human body. The henna colors vary between light and dark red. As with rug weaving and tattooing, henna preparation and application is a feminine practice that is often accompanied by rituals and chanting and is associated with *baraka* (blessing), healing, and protection from the evil eye; it is a sacred practice in most indigenous human communities, and hennaed designs are generally used to combat infertility (Westmarck 1926).

Henna is used to mark the major events and cycles of a woman's, a man's, and a child's life: birth, marriage, pregnancy, and circumcision, as well as other culturally meaningful events. Henna is applied on the hair, hands, and feet of brides and grooms, pregnant women, newborns, and circumcised boys. Indeed, henna is still the main element in bridal body adornment. This specific use is meant to protect the bride and groom from evil spirits, supernatural forces, illnesses, or death. Beyond the physical body, women also use henna to celebrate happiness or for therapeutic purposes, mainly in cases of depression, generally thought to be caused by evil spirits. In all these contexts, henna is believed to bring about solace and peace of mind in moments of overexcitement, nervousness, confusion, or internal tension. Indeed, the word *henna* is semantically associated with the word *lhnint* ("affection" in the Amazigh language), believed to originate in Paradise. Interestingly, henna designs resemble rug and tattoo designs. The frequency of inverted and non-inverted triangles, circles, and horizontal lines are reminiscent of women's other artistic designs and symbolic expressions.

Clothing/Textile

In Amazigh communities, women have been associated with producing clothing from goat, sheep, and camel wool since time immemorial, as the very ancient depictions of anthropomorphic figures covered with body embellishments that were recently discovered in Jabarran, Tassili N'Ajjer, in Algeria attest to. In these communities, textile-making, or "giving life to textile," is another aspect of Amazigh women's art production (Becker 2006).

Women have been creating assorted styles of dress for women, men, and children to celebrate familial life stages, such as marriage, birth, and

circumcision. The first wearing of these clothes is often accompanied by specific rituals where divinity is implored to bestow blessings on the wearers. These special clothes create family bonding and highlight the cultural meanings of specific stages in a person's life, and at the same time, they highlight the centrality of women in engineering and transmitting these events. These garments are also a means to ensure a particular socialization of people within their communities by inscribing specific social meanings and constructing specific values in the minds of the community members. By adding rituals, clothes become a way of transmitting identity and ensuring the continuity of the communities. In addition to celebratory dresses, Amazigh women make dresses that are used in collective mixed public dances. An example of such a dance is *Ahidous*, which is characterized by specific Amazigh dress styles (Becker 2006). Such dancing garments were originally used to celebrate harvest time and were performed in private and public spaces. *Ahidous* still enjoys great popularity among Amazigh and Moroccan North African populations in general.

Again, the motifs and designs of women-made clothing are like those used in rug-weaving, tattoos, and henna. The triangle, the circle, the horizontal and vertical lines, and the moon, as well as the bright colors, are carried over to textile-making. Like rug-weaving, textile-making is thought to bestow *baraka* (blessings) on whomever wears homemade clothes, and it protects them from dark forces (*djins*, or spirits) and from the evil eye. A textile-maker, like a rug-weaver, tattooer, or dressmaker, commands respect and authority in the community.

In sum, Amazigh women imagined and created designs that were originally used on rugs and were replicated in tattoo, henna, and clothing designs, expanding and anchoring their meaning in the lifestyle of the Amazigh people. Whether woven, tattooed, hennaed, or displayed on clothing, these designs are genuine keys to Amazigh women's spirituality and cosmology and to ways in which they transmitted them to their communities as tokens of peace of mind and *baraka*-bestowing means in moments of transition or anxiety. It is as if women unconsciously resist losing their art in the face of strong aggression by hegemonic and paternalistic religions.

There is yet another domain in which the rug designs are central: the Amazigh language, which women have not only preserved and transmitted throughout millennia, but also helped codify, as I argue in the following chapter.

NOTES

1. I use *rug* and *carpet* interchangeably in this book.

2. Interest in such plants has given rise to a field of research referred to as "medicinal plants." This field is still growing and evolving across the globe.

3. Afalou is situated in what is now northeastern Algeria.

4. This is a short text I wrote as my own reminiscences of Taghunja. It is amazing how some childhood images accompany us all our lives. One of these images is of myself as a nine-year-old child carrying what felt like a big wooden doll and chanting with other children:

> anzar a yanzar! (Rain, O Rain!)
> a yajddig n uzaghar! (You are a flower in barren wilderness!)
> rar aman s wasif! (Bring back water to the river!)

We were almost running through the narrow alleys of my Amazigh village, Imshihn, of the Ayt Ouragh tribe in the High Atlas Mountains. The doll was *Taghunja* ("big wooden spoon" in the Amazigh language), and the trick was to maintain her in an upright position, facing the sky. Our processions seemed endless, but the other trick was to pass all the doors of the neighborhood and merge with other processions of loud and excited boys and girls. I still remember neighbors opening their doors and splashing us with water as we passed by, but we did not seem to be bothered by this. We were swollen with joy and pride as water flowed along our cheeks and deep into our small bosoms. We were the heroes who could bring rain to the adults. Later, when I became a researcher in the Amazigh language and culture, I learned that *Taghunja* was the symbol of Tanit, the powerful pre-Islamic Amazigh goddess of fertility summoned to bring rain during drought. The image started to make sense to me: Tanit was expelled from the consciousness of North African populations with the coming of monotheistic religions, but she managed to inhabit their unconscious and reemerge in rituals imploring the sky for rain in times of droughts. I also recognized Tanit in women's rug designs and body adornment and was intrigued and fascinated by this finding. I come from a family of weavers; my paternal step-grandmother and aunts were the weavers of the village. The rugs they used to make were considered special, but I never knew they were works of art and carried symbols until I became a researcher.

5. Warps are the initial threads placed on the loom before the weaving process starts.

Chapter 5

Women and the Codification of the Amazigh Language

The codification of a language is a way of stabilizing it through, for example, writing. Highlighting women's role in the codification of the Amazigh language is not an easy task for several reasons, the most salient of which being the nature of the Amazigh alphabet, the lack of documents written with this alphabet, and the systematic marginalization of women in the linguistic canon. However, an interdisciplinary approach reveals genuine indicators of women's central role in the codification of the Amazigh language. Admittedly, further research in this field is needed.

While chapters 1 and 2 situate the story of the Amazigh populations and their language in a broad historical framework, and position women in this framework as both producers of culture and producers of knowledge, chapter 3 presents the Amazigh writing system (Tifinagh) as the central element that has kept the Amazigh history and culture together from antiquity to the present time, and chapter 4 links this alphabet to women's rug designs. Throughout these four chapters, glimpses of women through the filmy veil of female divinity, rug symbolic icons, or the process of community-building have been highlighted. This highlighting is synthesized through women's rug designs, their meaning, their powerful symbolism, and their importance in understanding the Amazigh language and culture. This fifth chapter builds on the four preceding chapters to underscore the linguistic aspect of the rug designs, a hitherto-neglected theme in Amazigh studies, and it argues that women's rug designs may well be at the root of the Amazigh alphabet, Tifinagh, and hence at the root of the codification of the Amazigh language.

WHAT DOES THE CODIFICATION OF THE AMAZIGH LANGUAGE MEAN?

In this chapter, as well as in the book, I consider the codification of the Amazigh language as involving both written and oral aspects, both of which related to women. In the discipline of linguistics, *codification* is defined as "the process of selecting, developing, and laying down (prescribing) a model for standard language use" (Sulama et al. 2013). The main goal of such a codification is to stabilize the language grammatically and lexically. In practice, codification may be seen as a visual method of representing human communication. This visualization has hitherto been achieved through the construction of alphabets as foundational blocks for the grammatical structure of a language.

Obviously, such a broad definition of codification presupposes another prior foundational element of human expression: oral communication. Indeed, orality preceded writing in human languages, and letters, diacritics, and so on represent sounds. In other words, prior to the creation of alphabets, human memory was prompted through sounds and rhythms, and humans reacted by creating images and symbols geared toward capturing and encapsulating meaningful sounds.

Although the word *alphabet* is constituted of the first two letters of the Greek alphabet *alpha* and *beta*, (alif ba) alphabets existed before the Greeks. For example, the Arabic alphabet (also used in Persian, Urdu, and other languages) went through many stages of evolution; additionally, the Yemeni Hamiri script (khat al-Musnad) is related to the Saba'ian era. In 1998, archeologist John Darnell discovered rock carvings in southern Egypt that push back the origin of the alphabet to at least two thousand years BC. Rock drawings and inscriptions are thus important in tracing back the origin of an alphabet. This fact positions Tifinagh as one of the oldest alphabets that humans ever created.

Based on this condensed information about language codification in general, we may say that the codification of the Amazigh language is intrinsically linked to the original artistic visual expressions of (oral) communication as expressed in rug designs that go back to antiquity and perhaps beyond it.

CODIFICATION, ART, AND WOMEN

While orality can help create a language, writing is essential in the process of codifying it. It is through codification that pronunciation, vocabulary, and the formalization and standardization of a language is achieved. The main linguistic method of standardizing a language is twofold: dictionary-compiling and grammar writing. Furthermore, languages with written forms are taught

in schools, thus allowing the language to acquire further means of sophistication. On the other hand, codification is associated with culture and is a means of preserving a language as a uniform system across regions. It also facilitates language planning and fosters more positive attitudes to its speakers. For all these reasons, the codification of a language is often driven by political and religious motives.

Codification, Amazigh women, and art are related both historically and in current times. This relationship is at the heart of the argument I make in this book, namely relating women, art, and writing in Amazigh studies. The history of the codification of languages is a history of the evolution of alphabets from hand lettering to typography, sometimes via calligraphy (Day 2016). Indeed, depictions of alphabets throughout recorded human history show that the latter do change in form. In the case of Tifinagh, chapter 3 shows that rock inscriptions change in form according to population movements and that there is a transition between epigraphy and *tirra* (writing). This phenomenon is also attested in the literature on Western alphabets.

Codification through visual forms brings us to creativity and how the brain writes. If humans have throughout history felt the urge to express themselves, we may read Amazigh women's weaving as language, as a means of communication that simply uses a different vocabulary, not based on words as defined linguistically, that is, as sounds or combinations of sounds that have a meaning and are spoken or written (*British Dictionary*).

To weave rugs and create objects and images, women used materials, that is, fiber, textile, and so on. Weaving, as chapter 4 shows, can express deeper truths, just like language. More than that, the weavers use lines and dots just like language. Enriched by more shapes and colors, the rug designs are the ancestors of the Tifinagh symbols, considered a manifestation of art.

The association of women with art and writing or artistic writing is not new. A good example in this respect, and one that is documented, is the association of women with calligraphy.

Arabic Calligraphy: An Example

Calligraphy is basically the artistic version of writing (Sakkal 1993).[1] Women, just like men, engaged with calligraphy in the recorded history of the Arabic language. The pioneer women in Arabic writing were also calligraphers. The development of Arabic writing has religious roots: the rise and expansion of Islam after the Qur'an was revealed necessitated the scripture. Both men and women participated in this endeavor, as al-Tamimi states:

> Due to the expansion of Islamic religion and the need for more literate Muslims to write legible Arabic script, men and women alike were assigned the role of

> improving the Arabic script. This could help avoid confusion in some Arabic letters for the new Muslims with Arabic as a second language. [. . .] Educated Muslim women and men were assigned a mounting role in writing copies of the Qur'an as well as teaching the art and religion to the young generation of Muslims to preserve the Holy Qur'an. This art was not limited to the writing of Qur'an but extended to include everyday items such as small plates, carpets, literature, metalwork, ceramics, glass, textiles, wood, ivory, rock crystal and even gardens. (al-Tamimi 2013: 28)

The first female calligrapher in the history of Islam was al-Shifa Bint Abdallah. She was a companion of the Prophet Mohammad, and according to the ninth-century historian Ahmad Ibn Jabir al-Baladhuri (1924), she was the first woman to acquire the skill of writing at a time when barely twenty people in Mecca could write. Al-Shifa inspired three women of the eighth century: Umm al-Darda' al-Sughra[2] (the Little One), Sana, and Gulsum al-Attabi.[3] However, the first female calligrapher whose works have survived to the day is Fadl (d. 873/74). She was a gentle writer with a beautiful style, and she was also a poet (al-Kutubi 1362). Fadl copied the Qur'an in November 907, and her copy is still extant today as the oldest-known work written by a female calligrapher that has survived until today. On the opening page of the work, she requests that everyone who reads the Qur'an that has been copied by her should say a prayer for her (al-Tamimi 2013).

On the other end of the Umayyad empire, the Andalusian female calligrapher Lubna Bint Abd al-Mawla (d. 984) is reported in al-Tamimi (2013). Lubna was the calligrapher of the Caliph al-Mustansir Billah al-Hakam of Umayyad Andalusia. She was also a fine Qur'an copyist, as **reported by** Ibn Bashkawal (d. 1182). In the tenth century, calligraphy was associated with the pedagogical teaching of the Qur'an and *hadith*, and several women were skilled in both in early Islam (Haddad and Findly 1985). As Islam expanded, the writing of Arabic developed more into an increasingly sophisticated calligraphy. According to Ettinghausen (1951) and Blair and Bloom (2003), Islamic calligraphy was so widespread that it became an essential part of decorations and architecture, particularly for mosques, which were often decorated with illuminated calligraphy on mosaic. This made calligraphy a discipline associated with the highest form of divinity for Muslims in the sense that it was not used merely to write and decorate, but also to fulfill and connect the artist with religion in an aesthetic way. As such, calligraphy became part of the Islamic teachings and traditions (ibid.). Calligraphers were not only artists mastering a skill, but religious scholars with the mission of passing on the Islamic faith. As al-Tamimi (2013: 29) states, "Calligraphy was kin to the pedagogical teaching of the Qur'an and the Prophet's traditions."

This association was so close that despite the spread of Islam, Arabic calligraphy preserved its characteristics. Further, the profession of calligrapher was inherited from fathers, brothers, and husbands. As with networks of *fiqh* scholars, many calligraphers passed on the art to their daughters. However, as al-Tamimi (2013) states:

> Males had the priority and women were secondary, [and thus] women who were schooled in calligraphy were naturally from a high socioeconomic class, [. . .] male calligraphers were not limited by class. (al-Tamimi 2013: 29)

With the further expansion of Islam in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, more women distinguished themselves as genuine figures of Arabic calligraphy (Hubbard 2006; Schimmel 1992; Zakariya 1979; Ibn Khallikan 1970). Of the many female calligraphers of the time, the most prominent one was Shuhda al-Katiba (1089–1178). In a discussion of the role of female calligraphers, Schimmel (1984: 47) notes that Shuhda's skill had both aesthetic and practical values, which drew the approbation of her contemporaries across the fields of Islamic learning, including the art of writing elegantly, a prerequisite for the transmission of *hadith*. Several of Shuhda's female contemporaries were also praised in the historical sources, but there appear to be none who approximates her fame or her range of talents. She looms large in the chronicles as a woman who fully availed herself of a variety of educational avenues available to Muslim women of the classical period. Shuhda lived into her early nineties, and at the time of her death, she was held in great esteem. Ibn al-Jawzi, her student, reports that her funeral prayers were conducted in Jami' al-Qasr, one of the large congregational mosques of Baghdad.

During the long time of Ottoman rule (from the fourteenth to the early twentieth centuries), the main context in which female calligraphers appeared was the Istanbul palace, where probably a good education was provided. However, artistic and cultural activities flourished in the sixteenth century, the peak of Ottoman civilization. The most prominent female calligrapher in the sixteenth century was Um Khatun, a blacksmith's daughter (Kazan). In the nineteenth century, Mustakimzade Suleyman Sadaddin Efendi's *Tuhfe-i khattatin* (ed. Ibn Ulemin Mahmud Kemal, Ankara: Turk Tarih Encumeni, 1928) and Ibn al-Emin Mahmud Kemal Inal's *Son Hattatlar* (Ankara: Milli Egitim Bakanligi, 1970) were prominent. Asma Ibret was the best-known female Ottoman calligrapher, many of whose works are still extant today. She created plaques and prayer books, as well as the Qur'an that she copied.

In sum, the development of women's writing, including calligraphy, provided cultural services for the ruling states in the region and at the times in which they lived.

In contemporary times, avant-garde artists mixed letterforms with art. Farell states:

> Contemporary artists have engaged language and letterforms [. . .] to show how wordplay can be used as a means to address larger artistic, social, and political concerns. (Farell 2016)

Farell (ibid.) mentions the American contemporary painter, sculptor, and printmaker Jaspar Johns (b. 1930) as an artist who made a paradigm shift in his discipline by depicting letterforms, either individually or superimposed one on top of the other, to, as he puts it, "address modes of perception and knowledge." His oeuvre, initiated by his book *Gray Alphabets* (Johns 1956), uses the expression "word painting" to depict the tension between text and image and between reading and seeing. A similar procedure is used by the contemporary Nigerian French artist Hawad in his depictions of Tifinagh (chapter 2).

WHY IS THE CODIFICATION OF AMAZIGH CRUCIAL FOR ITS SURVIVAL?

In Amazigh studies, it is assumed that there is a language called "Amazigh" or "Tamazight," that this language has an alphabet, Tifinagh, and that historically, only short texts used this alphabet. However, this raises a problem: in linguistics, when an alphabet is not used for long texts or is used for short periods of time, the language associated with it dies; but Amazigh did not die, which means that it is codified. The Amazigh language would not have survived as a "whole" system with a script of its own if it had not been codified. While a combination of oral usage and writing in other scripts (Hebrew, Arabic, Latin) helped the Amazigh language to survive, this was only insofar that an Amazigh alphabet has always been acknowledged as part of the language.

The *Tumbuktu manuscript* is an umbrella term for thousands of short texts, and in each case, only a mastery of Tamashek allows a deciphering of such texts, mainly because of the absence of vowels. As with most human languages, the first version of Tifinagh contained a limited inventory of consonants. Increasing contact between the Amazigh language and other written languages, especially Phoenician, was a positive factor in the improvement and modernization of the Tifinagh alphabet (Souag 2004; O'Connor 1996). The original Tuareg ancient Tifinagh was, thus, subject to several revisions (sometimes referred to as Neo-Tifinagh), the most important of which are: the former Sahara, the Libyan vertical, the horizontal Libyan, and the Amazigh Academy (Agraw).

Linguistically, non-organic scripts cannot help a language survive as an autonomous systematic "whole." In other words, codification, as understood in linguistics, can be achieved only in a language's alphabet. This alphabet is Tifinagh in the case of the Amazigh language, and rug designs are the oldest visual means of communication that resemble Tifinagh script and that were immortalized on rocks. Ignoring the documented graphic resemblance between rug designs, rock inscriptions, and Tifinagh, on the one hand, and the artistic elements in both rock designs and Tifinagh would make it difficult to explain the Amazigh grammatical system that only codified languages possess.

Tifinagh is the foundation of the Amazigh language and communication. Without it, we would not be able to know how to spell and pronounce the letters and words of the language, or, more importantly, how to think in it. The thirty-three or so letters or symbols of Tifinagh, like those of any other alphabet, are strung in a specific order and represent the basic set of the speech sounds that make Amazigh a language of communication. The letters/symbols represent both vowels and consonants and constitute a codified system. Additionally, the epigraphic aspect of ancient Amazigh rock inscriptions allowed a fusion of the artistic and linguistic components of Tifinagh, hence inscribing women's creative designs in the linguistic history of the Amazigh language. By locating the origin of the Amazigh language in traces of women's art, funeral inscriptions, myths, and symbols, this chapter penetrates art and rekindles linguistic elements in its history; it somehow oralizes writing and underlines the central role that women play in this oralization.

WOMEN AND THE AMAZIGH LANGUAGE

Most experts on the Amazigh language agree that the language is a very old one. Brett and Fentress (1996), for example, attest that many inscriptions in the Amazigh alphabet were produced at least in the fourth century BC. As for Galand (1976), he states that the ancient Amazigh alphabet was widespread in ancient times and was used in the areas that stretch from the Fezzan (part of today's Libya) to the Canary Islands. For this author, the rare official texts in Tifinagh were written from right to left, as in the case of Punic, while funerary inscriptions were generally transcribed in columns, read from either the bottom or the top. Galand (ibid.) adds that "although long texts are rare, and the bulk of the inscriptions are funerary, one long bilingual Punic/Libyan inscription does exist in Morocco" (mentioned in Skounti et al. 2003). The non-adaptability of the ancient Amazigh alphabet with long texts may be due to its artistic nature, but this statement remains speculative.

It is important to note that the written Amazigh language developed in parallel with the development of urban structures and civil institutions, mainly during the Amazigh kings' rule, according to Brett and Fentress (1996). These authors mention a text originating from Thugga (today's Dougga in Tunisia), which was produced in the Amazigh alphabet during the reign of the Amazigh kings in the middle of the second century, and independently from the control of Carthage (1996: 39). The authors state that "while most of the names are Punic, the titles are not." The most obvious such institution is GLD, from which 'Aguellid' (King or paramount tribal chief) is derived. The monarchical institution of GLD was hereditary (all GLDs had fathers with this title). Although not a permanent job, this institution rotated through the principal families of the town (seen in today's tribes' structure) (ibid.). Note that Brett and Fentress associate the appearance of the first recorded Amazigh alphabet with the appearance of the Amazigh kingdoms in the fourth century. Having an indigenous alphabet was a way of singling out Amazigh institutions from the then-predominant Punic institutions, according to the authors.

Interestingly, this development did not affect the artistic shape of the alphabet. This was the case even when the ancient Libyan script survived among the Tuareg Amazigh tribes as "Tifinagh" and even today with its revival in the Maghreb region (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania). The Tuareg maintained historical continuity by capturing the powerful symbolic reference in the Tifinagh-related inscriptions with Libyan characters and drawings produced in the third and fourth centuries. The nobility among them kept a "pure" language and emphasized a "pure" Tuareg race (Brett and Fentress 1996). This continuity is expressed by the authors in the following terms:

> The physical anthropology of the skeletons recovered from the tombs of the Garamantes in the Fezzan and protohistoric tombs in the Ahaggar compares well with the modern Tuareg. (Brett and Fentress, 1996: 206)

In this overall context, where Amazigh societies were mainly bilingual and bicultural, it is possible to speculate that some forms of indigenous art were integrated in predominant expressions of culture, such as inscriptions and codification. The same speculation can be extended to the period that succeeded the Hellenistic monarchy, that is, the Roman period, during which all of North Africa came under the control of Rome by the middle of the first century AD.

The initial transcription of the Amazigh alphabet, also known as the Libyan alphabet or Tifinagh, was thus epigraphic, that is closer to inscriptions and artistic designs than to ordinary letters. This is supported by their "orthogonal" and "highly symmetrical" forms (Brett and Fentress 1996: 38). For the purposes

of this book, the fact that Tifinagh is based on art rather than letters, and the fact that women are the artists in Amazigh communities, bring in the role of women in the codification of the language. The absence of such a hypothesis in Amazigh studies may be due to the double fact that art has always escaped censure and that weaving has not been associated with writing per se.

In the absence of documentation, an entry point to the main argument of this book is the historical and current relationship between the Tuareg people, women, and Tifinagh. Tifinagh is taught by the Tuareg mothers to their children, and women are also the ones who decorate household objects with short Tifinagh inscriptions thought to carry magical significance. Tifinagh does not only convey language, but it also conveys intimate and symbolic meanings that resist generalized use; women used Tifinagh on sand; they also used it for love letters and the transmission of secrets, but not for proclamations and literature, as mentioned in chapter 3. The alphabet carries with it a private discourse, closer to (but not exclusively so) women's world and the home than to external public contacts.

While Brett and Fentress (1996) advance that the Amazigh alphabet was "a simplified Semitic alphabet," the two types of language did not develop in the same way. In other words, while calligraphy maintained the artistic aspect of Arabic and developed independently of the Arabic language, the ancient Amazigh alphabet maintained its intrinsic relationship to the Amazigh language. Furthermore, unlike Semitic alphabets, where vowels appear as diacritics above and below consonants, the Amazigh alphabet coded consonants only. Another characteristic of the ancient Amazigh alphabet is, as mentioned before, used mainly on tombs and a few official texts. As such, it resembles Punic.

RUG DESIGNS, ROCK INSCRIPTIONS, AND TIFINAGH

There is a difference between the term *rug*, on the one hand, and the terms *rock* and *Tifinagh*, on the other hand. While the latter two are fused in historical documents and archeological readings and linked to Amazigh writing, the former is not. The main reason is that while we have original forms of the latter, we do not have original forms of the former. However, we have archeological evidence of women's weaving material that precedes rock inscriptions and Tifinagh. An example of such evidence was excavated from the Libyan ancient Amazigh site, Ghirza, to be compared with the modern patterns.

The patterns share similarities in the form of geometrical designs that continue to live. They explain the epigraphic nature of the Tifinagh alphabet and the fact that rug designs, rock inscriptions, and Tifinagh carry symbols that connote art. Just as in Cohen's (2016) analysis of statuettes that maintained

the ritual of the ancient Great Goddess (Déésse Mère) and constitute raw material to reconstruct the ideological unity of Western pre-history, and just as the abstract signs that accompanied the statuettes constitute graphic expressions that linked them to the realities they represented, so do the rug designs when juxtaposed to rock designs and Tifinagh. In other words, the rug signs and motifs that seem to be replicated on rocks are also replicated in cultural objects like pottery, tattoos, and jewelry.

The most striking aspect of the physical resemblance between the rug designs and the designs/scripts on the rocks is the use of the horizontal and vertical lines, in addition to the circle, which connote an intriguing presence of Tanit and women's spirituality. Archeological research has also revealed many other similar inscriptions throughout North Africa and the Mediterranean. The epigraphic similarity between Amazigh women's artistic designs and Tifinagh, and between rock art inscriptions and Tifinagh, are still vivid in today's rugs. Relatively speaking and considering the long span of time that separates the figures, changes in the form of the Tifinagh designs are minor. The visible resemblance in shape and the recurrence of lines and circles in both the alphabet and the art is indeed remarkable and may trigger serious work on the study of the general evolution of the Tifinagh script.

The present-day version of Tifinagh in Morocco is called Tifinagh–IRCAM (Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture). Whereas the ancient Tifinagh and neo-Tifinagh do not contain vowels, contemporary Tifinagh contains thirty-three symbols, including consonants and vowels, and is Unicode (having one sound per symbol). The latter Tifinagh version has been established based on the previous versions of the script and is used to write words and texts both inside and outside national public and private schools specifically. The IRCAM-Tifinagh is also used in advertisements throughout cities, towns, and villages, as well as in airports and at the entrances of ministries and other high-profile official institutions. In sum, Tifinagh is now fully accepted as the alphabet of the Amazigh language, thus consolidating the ancestral linguistic unity of Amazigh communities.

Given that the alphabet of a language is the basis of its morphology and syntax (that is, grammar), the Tifinagh alphabet signs constitute the building blocks of the grammar of Amazigh, a grammar that has withstood the test of time, although Tifinagh was not used abundantly in writing. The only explanation for the survival of Tifinagh and the Amazigh language is the unbroken trajectory of rug-weaving. What I am claiming here is that the Amazigh language existed orally for many centuries, but that it was codified and written as an alphabet only later, using women's carpet designs as a source of inspiration. In other words, Tifinagh survived through the art of rug-weaving, and it was women's artistic imagination that created, perpetuated, and saved the artistic designs and the Amazigh language. The symbolism that characterizes

both is a recognition of the centrality of Amazigh women's spiritual and utilitarian roles in their communities throughout centuries.

This does not mean that Amazigh did not have grammar prior to the mid-twentieth century, because language is by definition a grammatical system. The relative delay in the production of Amazigh grammars is mainly due to the fact that, unlike Arabic, Amazigh is a secular and private language that has not been promoted in public because it has never been supported by a holy book.[4] The survival of Tifinagh as a writing system is, thus, due to its close semantic and semiotic relationship to women's artistic designs, which also function as women's writing and speech. In other words, rug designs were central to the codification and stabilization of the Amazigh language. This codification has been accompanied by a strong orality component, which further supports the quasi-intrinsic relationship between the Amazigh language and women.

THE PREVALENCE OF ORALITY IN AMAZIGH WRITING

While biological and historical facts assert the precedence of orality (speaking), as human sound systems, over writing in language acquisition, the relationship between the concepts is complex and still poorly understood. As human sounds may be converted verbally or in writing, reading mediates the two either directly (verbally) or indirectly (mentally—via writing). To partly circumvent the complex relationship between the two modes of human expression, the concepts of orality and writing are mediated by another concept referred to in linguistics as "aurality."

On the other hand, orality and literacy raise issues that have always been central to any historical or literary reconstruction of a language in all its forms and shapes. Etymologically, the word *orality* is linked to "the spoken" and the word *literature* is derived from the Latin word *litterae*, which means "letters." However, the two words do not vehicle clear-cut concepts in the sense that literature does not involve books only, but also theatrical works and lyrics whose core substance derives historically from the spoken forms of languages. Ruth Finnegan (2008) rightly argues that many elements of literature, such as narratives in film and television, lyricism in pop song lyrics, and so on, are central components of contemporary cultural forms in media other than "letters." These important aspects of orality make of it the mainstay of communication, history, and social control (Sadiqi 2003). Although the religions revealed in North Africa and the Great Sahara were based on the scriptures, writing has never been abundant in this part of the world. As political and social power has been constructed on written culture,

the scriptures were jealously guarded by those who administered political and social power, and orality became reduced to "listening" and "obeying." Consequently, reading and writing became the exclusive prerogative of the ruling elites, and listening and obeying the function of the masses, especially women. This type of orality has systematically been relegated to the footnotes of official history as the long silences and gaps in the history of North Africa show. A mixture of misogyny and sexism exacerbated this situation.

However, these pervasive cultural dogmas made orality a powerful subversive tool in the hands of women. The Amazigh oral texts in the 2009 anthology *Women Writing Africa: The Northern Region*, which I co-edited, are presented as foundational voices in constructing the social history of the region. The journey of tracking oral texts across long time spans has always intertwined with the journey of tracking written messages in inscriptions and images.

Together with the ancestral art of weaving, Amazigh women's oral texts are the reservoir par excellence of Amazigh history. The style, images, and aesthetic qualities of this oral heritage cannot be separated from the various meanings the rug designs vehicle, and both modes of expression are primarily associated with women and the collective consciousness of the North African communities. For example, they constitute the cement of most Maghrebian Francophone and Arabic literature. Amazigh women's orality does not express women's daily concerns only, but it is also a catalyst of the most meaningful events in the history of the region. For example, it expresses female political leadership, language loyalty, religious and spiritual views, love, self-assertion, and so on.

With respect to female political leadership, the example of Kahina ("priestess" or "prophetess") is very telling (Sadiqi 2022). Perhaps the most famous Amazigh queen, army leader, and outstanding warrior, she was born in the Aures Mountains in today's Algeria sometime during the 600s CE. During her lifetime, Arab generals began to lead armies into North Africa, preparing to conquer the area and introduce Islam to the local peoples. Kahina is said to have directed the most determined resistance to the seventh-century Arab invasions of North Africa. Around the year 690, she assumed personal command of the heterogenous[5] tribal forces resisting the invasion, and under her aggressive leadership, the Arabs were briefly forced to retreat. Her reputation as a strategist and sorceress spread, and she managed to briefly unite the North African Amazigh tribes, also called "Ifriqya,"[6] ruling them and leading them in battle for five years before her final defeat. In the end, Kahina took her own life, after sending her sons to the Arab camp with instructions that they adopt Islam and make common cause with the Arabs. Ultimately, her sons participated in invading Europe and subjugating Spain and Portugal. Kahina's speeches and poems were all destroyed after her death. Only a

three-line poem by her survived in popular culture, and it was translated from Amazigh by the author:

Run, run my Amazigh horse,
Never defeated will you forever be!

Such oral literature relies more on recognized personal power than on institutionalized authority. It expresses a mixture of courage and chivalry, as in the above lines, in which the horse refers to war and courage, a major theme in Amazigh culture. However, the modern literature on Kahina is vast and includes other themes, as she has been adopted by a variety of movements—French colonial, feminist, Amazigh, Zionist, and Algerian nationalist (Hannoum 2001).

Orality has also served as an instrument of language loyalty. Amazigh women have shown loyalty to their mother tongues and the cultures they have carried since time immemorial. A case in point is Tunisia, which, being the closest of the Maghribi countries to the Middle East, had its indigenous populations Arabized to the extent that today, only 1 percent of them speak Amazigh. Yet there is some evidence that the Arabization of Tunisia wasn't quick, and that the Amazigh language was still in use among many of the tribes during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Belcacem Hamza, cited by Maddy-Weitzman, 2022). Indeed, the Tunisian pop singer Saliha achieved tremendous fame in the 1950s with her song "With the Shepherds," sung in Arabic and translated by the author. The song starts as follows:

With the shepherds, my child, my beloved.

The reference to young "beloved" shepherds is a poetic-nostalgic way of bringing back memories of the displaced Amazigh populations. These populations inhabited Djebel Wislat (Wislat Mountain), and they fiercely resisted the Turkish Beylical army in the middle of the eighteenth century. The poet-singer retraces the pains of exile suffered by the Wislatis in the diaspora. The women especially suffered humiliation and marginalization. Selma, a woman's name, symbolizes the Waslati women who were forced into exile, poverty, and marginalization, as the following excerpt indicates:

O, Selma, my dear, fate has decided
that people can become black after being white!

Frustrated in the face of helplessness, the poet sees the Wislat Mountain as a barrier to life and a conduit to death and malediction:

Patience, mount of death, misfortune will assail you!
Exile is our fate, destiny, malediction.

The song ends on a note of a confusing struggle between the desire to escape the Turkish invaders and death, either choice being painful:

Desire for escape, shall I have peace one day?
Or of suffering shall I die!

Language loyalty developed into militancy for the revival of the Amazigh language and cultural rights in Algeria and Morocco since the mid-1980s. As such, it is a means of what I would call "oral codification." Moroccan singer and poet Fatima Tabaamrant marked the revival of the Amazigh language in her own way. Fatima Tabaamrant was born in 1962, in Id Salm Idawchqra, in the Anti-Atlas, south of Morocco. Her tribe is called Ayt Baamrane, renowned for its resistance to the French colonization. In June 1996, the Journalists' Club of Tiznit, a nearby town, named her the first Amazigh artist of the southern region. She was given the name of "Raissa," a title customarily bestowed on distinguished Amazigh singers. On this occasion, she was offered a silver "ribab," a classical musical instrument, as a prize. From that point forward, Tabaamrant became a popular singer.

She was the first woman in the south of Morocco to write, compose, sing her own texts, and dance while singing. She sings about nature, love, and youth, as well as such contemporary issues as women's literacy. For writing consciously about the revival of Amazigh culture, she has gained popularity among a young and energetic Amazigh constituency. In 2007, Tabaamrant was nominated by King Mohamed VI to sit on the administrative board of the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture. "Wake Up, Sisters" was composed and sung in 1983 and published in Sadiqi et al. (2009: 254). Tabaamrant starts her poem-song as follows:

Wake up, sisters! Let us unite, sisters!
Life is no longer what it used to be.

Tabaamrant urges illiterate Amazigh women to awaken to their need for education if they want to lead a decent life and prepare a better life for their children. Education, she adds, is necessary at all ages:

Today we all need knowledge,
Even if we've never been to school.

Having suffered from a lack of education and having had to realize its importance, she sends a strong message:

Wake up and grab your chance!
For it's never too late for learning!

The poet-singer knows that books provide precious knowledge that is useful to women. In many parts of the Souss region, where she comes from, many men migrate to big cities or to Europe. The women left behind become the real heads of the family; they often must manage family affairs, supervise children's education, and take care of the elderly. Addressing these women, Tabaamrant notes that the ability to read and write would enable women to get firsthand and "undistorted" information from their husbands' letters:

When your husband goes far away,
And sends you a letter full of secrets.

Being able to read also allows women to express their needs to their husbands and makes them stronger:

And when you have news to tell him [your husband],
Your handwriting will make you stronger.

This poem resonated well with rural women because the proportion of illiteracy among Moroccan women is especially high in rural areas. It is interesting to note here that while demands for literacy are usually made by urban women in Arabic or French, Tabaamrant uses the Amazigh language to express a demand that rural women can understand. She ends the poem as follows:

Wake up, sisters, and enjoy learning.
Together we will know the world!

Other women, who do not even speak Amazigh, have greatly supported its teaching. Leila Mezian Benjelloun, a wealthy woman who became the first Moroccan woman ophthalmologist, decided to allocate some of her wealth to the promotion of education in rural areas and the promotion of the Amazigh language and culture. All her public activities revolve around these two goals. She is president of the Benjelloun-Mezian Foundation, which allocates grants to young Moroccan students around the world and contributes to the preservation of the Moroccan cultural heritage and the restoration of national monuments. She is currently the president of the BMCE Bank Foundation, whose two main missions are the promotion of education in rural areas and the preservation of the environment. Her most significant contribution in this respect is her Program *Madrasat.com*, which allowed the creation of some sixty well-equipped communal schools in the rural areas across Morocco. Not only do these schools offer free education to more than eight thousand young girls and boys, but they also provide them with books and school equipment.

Leila Mezian Benjelloun's work in this respect earned her a nomination by King Mohamed VI as a member of the Administrative Council of the Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture.

Another aspect of orality came to play a significant role in North African, especially Maghrebi, countries' struggle for independence. Theoretical work about the constructed nature of the nation-state in the concrete historical context of North Africa is still lacking. Women's oral texts in this regard bring new analytical methods from social movement theory to the study of colonialism, anti-colonial protest, and nation-building, which clarifies the process by which history, culture, religion, and oral tradition were integrated in the construction of modern North African national identities. This method contextualizes the North African case vis-à-vis concurrent anti-colonial struggles in other parts of Africa. It also underlines the roles played by subaltern groups (Amazigh, Jews, and women) at the inception of an Arab-Islamic nationalist discourse that subsequently contributed to a political order marginalizing them. Women's oral sources in this respect are primary sources. The colonizers themselves were aware of the importance of such texts, as the collections of Amazigh poetry by Arsene Roux and his collaborators during the 1930s and 1940s show. The spoken and chanted words of poets like Tawgrat Walt Issa N'ayt Sokhman are, indeed, a potential area of historical exploration. Not only were her poems instrumental in exhorting young men to fight under colonization, but many of them have been transmitted throughout the decades that followed the independence of the North African countries and immortalized in popular songs and testimonies that today's social historians use. Such texts are crucial for the rewriting of the history of North Africa as they highlight armed and non-armed resistance in the region.

Tawgrat Walt Aissa N'Ayt Sokhman was an Amazigh illiterate professional poet who lived at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Her birth and death dates are not known. All we know is that she was incredibly old and about to die by 1930. She grew up as a blind orphan and never married. She lived most of her life in the Amazigh village of Ayt Sokhman, and she became a professional poet in the Amazigh dance sessions called Ahidus/Ahidous. She celebrated her blindness as a mark of beauty. She imposed her personality on her family members and the people with whom she interacted. She faced everyday problems with extraordinary courage. Her poetry was cherished by her people and recited in the whole of the Middle Atlas, and her wide popularity forced the admiration of the French, who often compared her to the blind Greek poet Homer.

The French historian François Reyniers said that "she was neither a prophet nor a witch, but she had an imagination that astonished people with its extraordinary power." Toward the end of her life, around 1930, Tawgrat

emigrated to Tunfit, a village twenty miles from the town of Midelt in the Middle Atlas after getting desperate about the triumph of her tribe, Ayt Sokhman, over the colonizers. She died with two puzzles in her heart: How could the "unbelievers" defeat Muslims? And how could the Romans defeat the Imazighen? She died feeling bitter hatred in her heart for the colonizers, their Moroccan collaborators, and whoever did not fight them. She understood what happened, even as she wrote out of hatred, using words as weapons.

Tawgrat's poems are crucial for highlighting the Middle Atlas armed resistance. In addition to urban areas, Moroccan armed resistance took place in the Rif Mountains in the north, the Middle Atlas in the center, and the High Atlas in the south. The Rif resistance is the best-known because its leader, Mohamed Abdelkrim Khattabi, was a well-educated and highly cultured man who rubbed shoulders with Europeans and was acquainted with their war propaganda strategies. He managed to draw international attention to the cause for which he was fighting. In addition, the region of the Rif is located on the borders of the Mediterranean Sea and thus at the crossroads between Morocco, Europe, and the Mashreq. The armed resistance in central and southern Morocco remained largely unknown and almost forgotten because it was completely controlled by the French, who managed to keep under cover the fierce daily battles that lasted half of the Protectorate period (1912–1956). The French used the strategy of separating "rebellious" areas from "subdued" ones, as well as that of stopping ammunition from reaching the fighters, often located in difficult mountainous areas and literally cut off from the rest of Morocco.

The Middle Atlas and High Atlas armed struggles for independence were accompanied by a wealth of oral and written poems of resistance. Resistance poetry was couched in Arabic and Amazigh and was composed by men and women, both literate and illiterate. Of this poetry, it is the male written poems that have been included in official history. But resistance poetry in Amazigh was oral, and included women, who were clearly marginalized despite their participation in the struggle for independence.

Tawgrat's poems of resistance were composed in the 1920s, often couched in an Amazigh genre called *Thimawayin*. In this poetry, she incited women to resist the colonizers and defend their country, especially after the defeat of the men of their tribes. The texts of Sokhman's poems were collected from living people of her generation by Mohamed Chafik and published in 1982 ((Sadiqi et al. 2009: 352). In the poem below, Tawgrat accuses her fellow tribesman Moha Urriban of dishonoring his tribe:

You, Yes You Moha Urriban!
How you stained our tribal name,

Worse, she satirizes him as a runaway from the battlefield. Running away from war is considered shame in Amazigh culture, a shame that stays in the family for as long as the people of the tribe remember it:

Running, like a rabbit being chased by dogs!
And keep your mouth shut!

Tawgrat commands Moha Urriban to silence as the above line shows, and adds that he is fit only for what she believes to be a "low" and degrading job:

You are only fit to handle coal!

The poem deplores the presence of the French colonizers (the faithless) who drank from the tribes' sources of water (water is sacred in Amazigh tribes) and sauntered fearlessly among the population:

These faithless ones came drinking our waters,
Tied up horses fearlessly.

In the face of what Tawgrat perceives as utter dishonor and the failure of men to stand up to the colonizers, she calls on the women:

Take note Itto, Thuda, and Izza, call the women to carry the flag!
To war! Our Amazigh men are inert! Shame on you; who have no manhood!

Additionally, Michael Peyron's work (Peyron 2010) highlights Amazigh women poets. Yet the best-known resistances are associated with male leaders like Mohamed Abdelkrim Khattabi, Amir Abdelkader, or Habib Bourguiba, but almost nothing is known of women's resistance to colonization apart from oral texts and testimonies that have been largely marginalized from mainstream resistance literature, except perhaps that of Lalla Fadhma N'Soumer (1830–1863), as reported in Smail Salhi (2010).

In addition to illiterate professional women poets, ordinary women improvised poetry to decry the effects of colonization. Some of these oral poems were gathered and translated from Amazigh into English. The poem below was gathered, translated from Amazigh into English by the author, and published in Sadiqi et al. (2009: 236). I titled the poem "I Want to Tell You." The author, Rabha Moha, voices anger and rebellion against the French colonizers who occupied the city in which she was living:

I want to tell you what big buildings
The French have built for themselves in Meknes city.

Rabha's angered gaze captures the luxury in which the French were living and contrasts with the misery in which the colonized Moroccans lived. In a sarcastic and witty way, she expresses her willingness to eat French food, since it is free of charge:

They have decorated the buildings with rich-looking marble floors.
Let us take buckets and ask for food from the French,
And eat soup since they give it to us for free!

Another ordinary woman, Rabéa Qadri, seeks in her poem, "De Gaule the Criminal," published in Sadiqi et al. (2009: 30) to resist colonization. Rabéa expresses her feelings in a direct way and even uses the French general's name to voice her anger and determination to fight the colonizers and free her country:

Bring me De Gaulle's head,
I shall burn it, I shall grill it!

She then acknowledges the deeds of the people who sacrifice their lives for freedom:

Our young martyrs have brought us liberty.
They sacrificed their money and progeny.

In a final outcry, the poet expresses her refusal of any reconciliation with the colonizers:

France, oh, enemy!
No way to become friends!

Women's orality as a weapon against colonialism is revisited in present-day oral testimonies that corroborate the angry feeling of the poems. Oral testimonies are equally common oral genres used by women, especially the illiterate ones. Some of these testimonies are about love and militancy, such as the text "Love and Militancy," in which a woman defies the French general Juan and uses her artistic talents to serve the nationalist struggle for independence.

The first-ever published poetry by an Amazigh illiterate woman was that of Mririda N'Ait Atiq'. This poet was poor; she lived in Tassaout, south of Morocco, at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. "Mririda" is a nickname that people gave her and that she happily accepted. She used to sing her improvised poems in public markets (*souqs*),

where she attracted large audiences. After her death, she was acknowledged as a poet, and Moroccans still cherish her memory. In the preface to René Euloge's book on Mririda, he explains that he was told by the inhabitants of Tassaout that a woman poet regularly went to the region's *souq* to recite and sing her poetry. When René Euloge met and spoke to Mririda sometime before 1927 (when he recorded her poems), it was the first time a European had ever visited Tassaout. Mririda N'Ayt Atiq's poems are prototypes of oral literature in which the real subject is the self, a rather unconventional theme within a Moroccan culture emphasizing the collective self.

The two poems are translated from French. In their texture, they remind the reader of European ballads, but they also carry a strong Amazigh flavor in a period when women were denied the least of rights, let alone allowed to "publicize" their poetry. "Mririda" focuses on the poet's construction of the self from her rural life:

People call me Mririda, the agile wren of meadows,
With eyes like gold, but the rennet's white chest is not mine,

The originality of the poem's language reflects the strong personality of the poet and her desire to name herself as a poor, illiterate Amazigh woman living in a remote mountainous village:

Yet, like her, I have my *zgharit*, my *zgharit*,
Which reach the sheepfold.

The word *zgharit* refers to women's cries of joy, and the word *baraka* refers to "blessing":

My marvelous and exciting *zgharit*,
Since my first steps in the fields,

Mririda knows her strength resides in her weakness, as she expresses below:

He who marries me will feel my heart beating in his hand,
As I often felt under my fingers the crazy heartbeats of the rennet.

The second poem, published in Sadiqi et al. (2009: 133) is called "The Affront." In this poem, Mririda addresses her mother-in-law in defiant terms that deny any suffering after the separation:

You are wrong, mother of my ex-husband,
If you think that I suffer.

This poem is a rebellious expression of dissent and condemnation of a husband who exploited her and stripped her of dignity. The poet speaks of the jewels given by the groom to the bride upon contracting the marriage. These jewels remain the property of the husband, who takes them back in case of divorce. "Did he ever give them to me?" asks the poet, a simple question that raises the whole issue of Moroccan women's legal rights:

He took back my jewels.
Did he ever give them to me?

Her divorce from this husband is depicted in the text as a regaining of her freedom:

Say to your son who repudiated me that from my memory
Are gone the good and bad days of our once shared life.

The fact that Mririda addresses her mother-in-law, another woman, attests to the notorious power that mothers-in-law used to have. This is strong woman-to-woman language:

Say to your son that
Even his name I do not recall!

Women also used orality to invest in the powerful field of spirituality and religious authority. Beverly Mack (2004) argues that even those Muslim women who acquire knowledge through the written word often tend to favor oral means of imparting and (re)constructing knowledge. This is certainly true in the case of some North African women who managed to become central for the functioning of *zawiyas* (religious brotherhoods) and mosques (Elboudrari 1993). A residue of a rich repertoire of women's Sufi didactic poetry is a type of oral texts that women still sing in the south of Morocco. The text, "O Master of Lights," is an example. Such texts reflect popular religion as expressed by women.

Women's religious and spiritual power elevated them to the status of venerated saints across North Africa. "Wliyas," "Mrabtas," "Shrifas"—all meaning "female saints"—invoke *baraka* (a mixture of religious charisma and noble descent), which makes women detain and exercise social authority.

In parallel to spiritual agency through orality, women's oral blessings, profanity, curses, insults, and songs become consequential. The well-known *Sebeiba* texts are ancient ceremonial songs by women from opposing communities in Amazigh, southern Algeria. Their gathering follows a difficult journey in the desert heat. Only very few women still know some scattered texts and their rhythms. Some of the words used have lost their meaning.

Some satirical expressions can be explained only by women from outside their original communities, the women of Djahil (Algeria), for example, who enjoyed and preserved the poetry. These songs were sung by women of Djanet, a town in the extreme southeast of Algeria, near the Libyan border. The inhabitants of Djanet are sedentary Tuaregs who celebrate *Sebeiba* during the first month of the Muslim year. While the exact historical and social facts of the origins of *Sebeiba* are unknown, Djanet's inhabitants give a mythical and religious origin to the ceremony of *Sebeiba*, assuming it was first practiced in memory of Moses' triumph over Pharaoh. The celebrating ritual of *Sebeiba* involves a symbolic war that finds expression in a highly attractive theatricality, including a performance by a chorus of young women singers. In the *Sebeiba* rites, women are the muse and the source of poetic inspiration. Women's status in society is presented as more inductive to artistic creation (composition, rhythms, and poetry) than men's. They are presented as the possessors of the secrets and strengths of the words that may save a life or kill by means of praise and satire. Women use metonymies and metaphors of their bodies to express the identity and sovereignty of the group. The poems deal with politics, religion, memory, and identity. They reinforce the social, religious, political, and philosophical values of ancient Algeria. This is an excerpt (translated from Amazigh by Meriem Bouzid; personal communication):

Women of El-Mihan:
She took the dung and went to water the plants.
What happened in the center? I asked.

The response:

Women of Zelouaz:
Women of El-Mihan are mere slaves.
They collect dung for gardens, while women of Zelouaz are honorable.

On the other hand, Amazigh women also used the Qur'anic and prophetic traditions (hadith) to express their piety and teach it to others orally. Rausch (2004) studies this didactic poetry composed in local vernaculars and argues that it facilitates the proliferation of the knowledge of Islamic dogma, rules of practice, history, and lore among local illiterate inhabitants. Among women, educational chanting sessions for the internalization of this didactic poetry are frequently transformed into communal gatherings for ritual worship, in which education constitutes a significant component. Among Amazigh women, afternoon ritual gatherings, in which centuries-old Amazigh didactic poetry is still chanted, are held throughout the Sous region of southwestern Morocco today. Tracing the roots of these educational ritual events back to an Amazigh religious literary tradition and educational campaign that lasted from the

sixteenth to the twentieth century, the text below underlines the significance of illiterate women's often-neglected participation in the transmission of Islamic knowledge and culture.

The following text was gathered and translated with the help of a local assistant by Margaret Rausch, who states:

> Popular didactic poetry should be distinguished from the fiqh (jurisprudence) manuals, Hadith collections and *nasihas* (religious counselling) which were also metered and versified didactic tools, but they were not intended for memorization by the general public. Some of the "popular didactic poems" exist only in oral form with varying versions today. (in Sadiqi et al. 2009: 386)

The extent and significance of this level of instruction is evident from the fact that this poetry is still widely known, appreciated, and chanted by men and women in separate ritual gatherings throughout the Souss region today. Moreover, members of the Darqawi Sufi order have recorded some of it in cassettes available for purchase in some parts of the Souss region today, and popular preachers have revived it by including it, together with their own similar new didactic poetic texts, in their ongoing preaching missions to provide religious guidance to illiterate populations today. The poem starts with an imploration of the prophet (referred to as "Master of Lights"):

Peace be upon you O Master of Lights, O Flower of everyone who is born.
If only we could be your guests in the graveyard.

In the text, the worship of God is inextricable from women's everyday chores. This type of oral poetry escaped the hegemony of written Arabic and French in schools without losing touch with the expression of religion in a unique way. It also highlights the historical link between the south of Morocco and sub-Saharan countries, where this type of poetry is immortalized by women like Asma'u, according to Rausch (2009).

The houries of paradise, they are standing at the entrance.to that
We are better than those who always have what they need.

The poet compares the elevated status of the poor and illiterate to that of the wealthier women, who were more privileged:

We are better than those who always have what they need.
We are in this world, so our troubles and faults are many.

Finally, a strong bastion of women's orality is the family. Women in North Africa have always been associated with the family. All of women's family functions have been significant for the family structure; from wives, sisters,

female in-laws, to mothers, they are the ones who have been shaping and transforming the deep cultural views and values of the family. The most culturally significant family events—namely, marriage, birth, circumcision, and death—are historically celebrated, transformed, and transmitted by women's songs and rites. Songs describe marriage ceremonies, the beauty of the bride, and the status of the groom. Accompanied by music, drums, and dancing, songs also describe the three stages of a wedding: the *dfu'* (day of offering gifts and presents to the bride), the *henna* (a traditional ceremony of hand and feet decorating performed for the bride prior to the wedding ceremony), and the *dakhla* (the physical meeting of the bride and groom). The bride is ushered to her would-be husband's house by her female kin. The song also depicts the traditional hospitality and generosity of North African families. In the Amazigh wedding songs, the bride's mother expresses feelings of joy and sadness, as she is happy to wed her daughter; "you are better than a beautiful singer," but she is also worried that her in-laws could mistreat the bride; she advises her daughter to be watchful. Local versions of these songs are found throughout North Africa. The poem below was gathered and translated by the author in 2007–2008.

O, Bride, May God assist you! May He give you luck!
Give me your hand to decorate with henna.

The wedding henna ritual and song is accompanied by meaningful advice to the bride. Such advice is a woman-to-woman discourse that shows the importance of female agency and power in Amazigh communities.

Don't let your female in-laws call you a dirty girl.
They will turn you into a shepherd or a slave.

Storytelling is another family ritual related to women's oral practice. Possessing the skill of storytelling is an old woman's way of ensuring status within the family and transmitting specific values. The art and technique of storytelling show older women's dexterity in ensuring dependence. Storytelling is also a communal participatory experience. Women participate in formal and informal storytelling as interactive oral performance—such participation is an essential part of traditional communal life, and basic training in a particular culture's oral arts and skills is an essential part of children's traditional indigenous education on their way to initiation into full humanness. Women's tales are indeed ways of stretching the imagination.

In Amazigh communities, the most common type of female narratives are folktales, oral discourses in which older, illiterate women usually mix their

storytelling with self-empowerment. The original authors of folktales may be unknown, but the tales have been transmitted from generation to generation usually by older women. For example, Michael Peyron (2003) records in his book *Women as Brave as Men: Berber Heroines of the Moroccan Middle Atlas* a folktale he titled "Fadma and the Ogress." This tale was told to him in the 1980s by El-Hajja Rqia, an old Amazigh illiterate woman who lived in the Ayt Warayn region, south of Taza, Morocco. Fadma is presented as an ordinary woman who appreciated working with a French story-collector. The fact that the latter managed to learn and speak Amazigh encouraged her to cooperate with him. The tale mixes supernatural and real aspects. The storyteller invokes a strange and timeless world in which wild beasts can speak. Despite the presence of the Muslim pattern of invoking God, the tale is reminiscent of the pre-Islamic era. The protagonist is a woman. Compared to her husband, and contrary to the usual gender expectations within Moroccan society, Fadma is not only the family provider, but also the stronger, wittier, and more intelligent party of the couple. Her husband is depicted as foolish, inconsequential, irrational, irresponsible, and with no effect on family unity.

Women's orality also records powerful stories of family strength and survival. "Two Feisty Tales" locates the family as a woman's primary concern. Lalla Mina, a woman, left on her own for two months by her husband and realizing she had to cater for her two girls whom her husband had brought from a previous marriage, managed not only to survive, but to improve her family's lot by baking and selling bread. Starting with one loaf of bread, she had reached sixty-four before her husband came back. When the latter arrived home, the house was so full of bread that Lalla Mina's husband "almost walked on the bread that was rising all over the rug." The author of the story, Hafsa Bekri-Lamrani (cited in Sadiqi et al. 2009), also told the story of the sixty Algerian women who fled from an Algerian jail and ended up being adopted and collectively married by Mohamed V, the then–Moroccan king. Both stories are occasions of women empowerment.

Lullabies are an oral genre that has always been associated with rural and urban women across the whole of North Africa. The strong maternal emotions they convey is proof of their intrinsic relation to women's inner self. In addition to the two female genres, many women expressed the deeply personal though individual poems they wrote in their oral mother tongues.

In sum, women in the Maghreb codified the Amazigh language through oral genres. This type of codification is unique in the sense that it is accompanied by a preexisting artistic visual codification immortalized in the rug designs.

NOTES

1. While writing only necessitates a pen, calligraphy necessitates a broad-tip instrument, a brush, and other writing instruments that facilitate the execution of pre-designed letters in an artistic way.

2. She was called "al-Sughra" to differentiate her from Umm al-Darda', the aforementioned *hadith* transmitter.

3. The sources do not give information as to the exact dates of their birth or deaths, except for the last one, who is said to have died in 835. Besides the record of their names, these three women are reported to have lived in the early Abbasid Period and to have possessed fine writing styles. Sana is said to have been self-educated in the arts and to have received her *ijaza* (license) from her teacher, the famous calligrapher Ishaq Bin Samad, and Gulsum is reported to have also been an eloquent speaker and a poet (al-Tamimi 2013).

4. Although North Africa was ruled by powerful Amazigh dynasties from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, the language of the royal courts and public politics has always been Standard Arabic. Marginalized in the public spheres of power and relegated to the private realm, the Amazigh language has largely been preserved by women, and the fate of Amazigh and women has always been parallel: they were both marginalized during colonization and state-building, and they were both propelled to the forefront of language and women's movements by the end of the twentieth century.

5. The Amazigh people of the seventh century were not religiously homogenous. Christian, Jewish, and pagan Amazigh populations were spread through the region that is now Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya.

6. The name *Ifriqiya* apparently derived from an Amazigh tribe living in the Carthage-Tunis region, and it was Latinized by the Romans and Arabized into Ifriqiya by the Arabs.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

This book used an interdisciplinary approach that combines linguistics, archeology, history, anthropology, and sociology to argue that Amazigh women's ancestral rug designs may well be at the root of the codification of the Amazigh language. Archeological findings and theorizations that ensued proved to be very helpful. Linguistic analyses of the rock inscriptions corroborated many archeology-based statements about Tifinagh. Although scattered and suffering from serious gaps, historical accounts, whether traditional or modern, Western or local history, offered the relevant descriptions of specific periods that increased my understanding of the phenomena involved. Anthropology and sociology were also important in using present-day women's practices to crack some traditional cultural codes. Indeed, each of these disciplines helped me understand how the past and present language and culture are deeply intertwined in comprehending Amazigh women's lives and contributions to the linguistic and cultural survival of anything Amazigh. The interdisciplinary nature of the approach used in this book is also necessary for three other reasons. First, it helps us to understand the available pre-modern texts of the Amazigh people. Second, as such, it illuminates the reading of the significant gaps that exist between the available documentation on the Amazigh language and culture. And third, it allows a better understanding of the extraordinary interplay between art, orality, and writing in the case of the Amazigh language.

The adopted approach is admittedly complex, but such is the journey of the Amazigh language. Bringing in female ancestral agency is a way of debunking this complexity, given the systematic marginalization of this agency in all the disciplines that constitute the theoretical background of this book. This agency also sheds light on the combination of orality, art, and writing in the codification of the Amazigh language.

This is a unique case in linguistics whereby Tifinagh, a millennial alphabet that replicates artistic designs previously imagined by women, and that was not used for long texts, has not precluded the Amazigh language from survival to the present-day. More than that, while Hebrew, Arabic, and Latin scripts were used to codify the Amazigh language, they hardly touched the linguistic identity of the Amazigh language, probably because these codifications left out the linguistic nerve of the language: Tifinagh.

By focusing on Tifinagh and linking it to the women's artistic designs that preceded it, this book proposes a specific codification process that fits the linguistic identity of the Amazigh language and highlights women's role in it. By so doing, the book is an attempt to resolve the conundrum that a language dies when its alphabet is not used extensively.

Facts support these hypotheses. First, the Amazigh language existed for millennia in an oral form that has constantly linked Tifinagh with the assumption of a written form. This is different from the case of Kurdish, often compared to Amazigh. Whereas the two most-used versions of Kurdish, Kurmanji and Sorani, are written in scripts based on Hawar, which is derived from Latin in the former case and from Arabic in the latter case, Tifinagh, is a homegrown independent alphabet.

Based on these facts, this book links the homegrown artistic roots of Tifinagh to the now-acknowledged fact that women are the artists in Amazigh communities. The physical resemblance between the rug designs and the Amazigh alphabet highlights women as agents in the linguistic codification and stabilization of their mother tongue. Further support comes from the fact that historically, it was Tuareg mothers who taught Tifinagh to their children, and it was them who used to draw letters on the sand (Sadiqi et al. 2009). Tifinagh signs were, indeed, believed to convey special meanings and cryptic messages that only their authors, that is women, could understand or decipher. In modern times, anthropological, sociological, and literary studies have shown that Amazigh women's rug and tattoo designs, like Tifinagh, were forms of writing, as mentioned in the book.

These conclusions may be the key to another linguistic enigma that can be expressed as follows: While Amazigh communities have never been united on religious grounds, they have always been so on linguistic grounds. What is meant by "linguistic unity" in this context is that Amazigh constitutes one language in the sense of one grammatical system. Differences between the various dialects of this language are attested at the levels of sound and meaning (André Basset 1952; Sadiqi 1997, among others). In other words, linguistic unity has constituted the backbone of Amazigh culture and the main means of its survival. In a sense, while religious practices have been local, linguistic unity safeguarded the larger boundaries of Amazigh communities, and it continues to do so. Interestingly, this unique configuration of

the religious and the linguistic has been solidified, preserved, and transmitted by women.

Two observations may be recalled to support this statement. First, as shown in chapter 3, a striking fact about the Tifinagh alphabet is its perennial life, even though it has not been historically used much and not for long texts. Second, theoretically speaking, the time span between the adoption of an alphabet and the standardization of a language is usually long, yet in the case of the Amazigh language, the standardization of Tifinagh and the standardization of the Amazigh language happened almost simultaneously, from the 1960s onward. This shows that the Amazigh alphabet was not created from scratch, but rather inspired or adopted from similar preexisting rug designs. The striking physical similarity between the designs and the alphabet is a characterization of the Amazigh language and culture. This similarity also explains how the longevity and relative "private" nature of both position women at the heart of the codification of the Amazigh language.

In seeking to place women in the history of the codification of the Amazigh language, this book is an attempt to fill a long-standing gap in the academic field of North African women's history.[1] Pursuant to the 2010–2011 uprisings in the region, there is an increasing interest in linguistic historiography and the role of women in the construction of the knowledge that underpins it. The dearth of research in this field may be due to the scarcity of documentation on the Amazigh alphabet; the focus on the institutionalized, often literate, formal, and non-domestic contexts of language use; and the field of linguistics' lack of interest in the domestic spaces, where women have historically been evolving or in women as sources of serious information and knowledge-making. Indeed, the male canon has historically targeted the male readership and comforted the patriarchal perspective.

Admittedly, this endeavor is neither simple nor easy given the shortage of records and material sources, in addition to the obvious methodological challenges. In focusing on both the oral and written aspects of the codification of the Amazigh language, this book problematizes these two aspects in the process of codification in the form of an interrogation that is left for further research: Is our current understanding of codification as scripture-based an act of imagining fictive boundaries that often blur linguistic continuity? Granting that this continuity exists, is codification in the case of the Amazigh language an act of oralizing writing?

To answer this question, a few facts come to mind. One such fact is that the dynamic between the oral and the written codification of the Amazigh language is manifesting in various new forms that continue to adapt without losing the ancestral ones. This is attested in tattooing and jewelry, but more importantly from the perspective of this book, in calligraphy and computerized language.

Tattooing and jewelry-making continue the oral part of the Amazigh codification and calligraphy, and digitized writing continues the writing part of it. This book is an attempt to prove that while the role of women is assumed in the first case, it needs to be acknowledged in the Amazigh studies' canon in the second case.

NOTE

1. Within the larger framework, the history of women in linguistics is still at its beginnings (Breyfogle 1991 and Ayres-Bennet and Sanson 2020).

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About the Author

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